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Frank K. Rich

EARLY

ENGLISH LITERATURE

(*TO WICLIF*)

BY

BERNHARD TEN BRINK

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

HORACE M. KENNEDY

PROFESSOR OF THE GERMAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN THE BROOKLYN COLLEGIATE AND POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

(*TRANSLATION REVISED BY THE AUTHOR*)

NEW YORK
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1883

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TO

FREDERIC J. FURNIVALL,

THE LEARNED AND DEVOTED STUDENT OF THE GREAT POETS
OF HIS NATION,

THE TIRELESS AND SUCCESSFUL EXPLORER OF THEIR WEALTH,

AND

GENEROUS PROMOTER OF GERMAN CO-LABOUR,

IN FAITHFUL FRIENDSHIP.

FROM THE PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL.

THIS work has a twofold purpose. It seeks, in general, to promote an historical understanding of English literature; and at the same time to extend this to wider circles.

Regard for these "wider circles," whose interest I hope to gain in a subject certainly not unworthy of it, has excluded from my book much that will be missed by the student, and even some things which will be regretted by the master.

The beginner needs a guide in the labyrinth of literature concerning literature; such a guide is not offered him here. The scholar will wish to know the proofs supporting the views presented, and will not always find his wishes satisfied.

I hope to meet both requirements in a special brochure with the title, *Manual to the History of English Literature*, which, while most closely following the account here given, will form an independent whole, intelligible in itself.

THE AUTHOR.

Strassburg, i. E., March, 1877.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

In submitting this work to English readers, it is proper that I should indicate the nature of the revision which the author has consented to make, and which can scarcely fail to render it more valuable. While leaving the body of the book substantially unchanged, he has not disregarded the suggestions of critics nor ignored the results of recent investigation. Hence some passages have been modified, a number of footnotes have been added, and an Appendix touching in detail various points of controversy, has been prepared. The English of the Appendix is the author's own, written at first hand to save the labour of translation.

I would acknowledge my grateful indebtedness to the author for the acute and learned criticisms with which he has aided my own work of translation; but as I have had final oversight on all points bearing upon the translation, as such, it is only just to add that the author must not be held acconntable for its faults.

Like the original, this volume will be found to contain a large number of extracts, in prose and verse, from Old and Early English authors. These have, without exception, been translated from the original texts into modern English. In rendering the poetical passages cited, I have tried to reproduce the ancient metre and tone.

HORACE M. KENNEDY.

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BOOK I.

BEFORE THE CONQUEST.

Longað þonne þy læs, þe him con leóða worn
oððe mid hondum con hearpan grêtan,
hafað him his gliwes giefe, þe him god sealde.
GNOMICA EXON. III., 170.

EARLY ENGLISH LITERATURE.

I.

AFTER the settlement of the English tribes on British soil, some time passed before English literature began. Yet literary monuments are not lacking which, to judge from their substance, are descended from a pre-literary age, and point back to an epoch when the Teutonic conquerors of Britain, either wholly or partially, still inhabited their earlier home. Dim and varying is the light which these most ancient products of the English muse shed upon the original abode and the incipient political, and race-relations of the later Englishman. There appear distinctly, however, in these poems the genius and the manners of a race who ploughed the sea; who loved booty and strife; and whose intoxication was the hero's fame that flowed in the mead-hall from the glee-man's lips.

According to the testimony of history as well as of saga, the original home of the English was the Cimbrian peninsula, and the adjacent portion of the mainland, eastward from the Elbe. Here dwelt the several small tribes into which this people were divided: in the north were the Jutes; and next to them, the Angles, whose name the point of land between the Fiord of Flensburg and the Slei still preserves; farther southward the Saxon prevailed over a wide region. They were an ambitious, enterprising race, steeled by a ceaseless struggle with the sea, whose proximity often became a terror to them: a terror chiefly in the spring, and on the approach of autumn, when, under the pressure of fierce storms, the billows surged with resistless, destroying

power upon the low coasts. Wearisome and relentless was the sway of the winter, which bound the flood in its "ice-fetters." So that the coming of summer, when the mild winds blew from the sea, and the waters gleamed graciously again in the sunbeams, was like a deliverance.

In such a land developed the myth of Beowa, the divine hero who overcame the sea-giant, Grendel, and fighting the fire-spitting dragon,—also a personification of the raging sea —slew and was slain. But Beowa did not remain forever dead. He is essentially Frea in a new form, the bright god of warmth and fruitfulness, whose gold-bristled boar decked the helmets of the English warriors.

Nor was the struggle waged only against the elements. The Angles, Saxons and Jutes were often at war with each other, or with neighbouring tribes. In the spring when the storms were stilled, the sea enticed to expeditions of war or rapine. The ocean was then a friendly element in spite of its terrors; and the sea-farers committed themselves to the ship, to the "sea-courser," to the "sea-wood," which, "like a bird foam-necked," glided away upon the "course of the swans," the "path of the whales." Not far distant were the Danish islands, and the coasts of Scandinavia. They ventured out upon the North Sea, and followed the German coast to the mouth of the Rhine, where Roman territory began. Oftentimes they continued their daring cruise along the shore where Belgic and Gallic tribes lived under Roman rule. There Britain was visible, thrusting her brilliant chalk-cliffs out toward the coast of Gaul. It was deemed a prosperous land, rich in herds, a land bound to Gaul by an ancient community of race and sacerdotal mysteries. The strange figures of legend haunted the channel between island and mainland. Muffled voices were heard at night on the Armorican coast, when the ferryman of the dead turned his overladen boat toward the opposite shore.

Britain had been subject to Rome since the days of Agricola. Roman highways intersected the country; a number of cities with temples, baths, colonnades, had sprung up, in which the proud language of the conqueror was heard. Here, as in Gaul, the German sea-robber's love of plunder was stronger than his fear of the Roman name. In the course of the fourth century, the Saxons made more than

one inroad upon the British coast. Fear seized the native Britons, as it did their Roman conquerors. The imperial power, threatened also in the north by Celtic barbarians, gathered new strength when Theodosius, an energetic governor, came to Britain. The attacks of the Saxons were warded off; the Picts and Scots were thrust back to the Forth. But it was like the last flare of a light before extinguishment. At the beginning of the fifth century, the Germanic world burst with might upon the Roman empire. Rome herself was pillaged by the West-Goths. The legions stationed in Britain were called back. The Britons now had nothing save their own strength to meet the dangers threatened by Picts and Scots, as well as by the Teutonic barbarians.

The great migratory movement which had included nearly all the Germanic peoples, now carried the English with it, no longer single bands and retinues, but entire tribes. A strong tide of immigration from the Cimbrian peninsula and the mouth of the Elbe began to spread over Britain, especially toward the middle of the century. Commencing at the southeast extremity of the island, the immigrants seized, in the lapse of a century, a greater part of the southern coast, and the eastern coast as far as the Forth.

The farther the Teutons advanced, the stronger was the resistance they met. The Roman armies had indeed left Britain; the Britons had lost through the foreign régime a part of their original strength. But what remained to them was roused to the uttermost by hate and desperation. The Celtic element, which, outside of the cities, had well nigh preserved its vitality, gathered itself with new energy against the Teuton; and sometimes in the conflict with Germanic paganism, the native religion again broke through the vesture of Christianity. The struggle was bloody and hard-fought, especially where the English encountered fortified cities which they could not take without long effort, owing to imperfect science of war. A large number, after being stormed, were left in ashes; the sword of the victor raged pitiless, often against the defenceless.

There was as little lack of heroic leaders among the Britons as among the English. Many of their names are commemorated in the Welsh bardic songs, whose professed antiquity,

it is true, cannot defend them against the suspicion of being, at least in part, patriotic fictions. Later chronicles, still more legendary than these songs, lavish on the name of Arthur all the glory which is wont to invest the forms of mighty rulers and heroes of chivalry. And through him it gives rise to an apocryphal Charlemagne for the Celtic world.

Toward the end of the sixth century, more than the entire eastern half of the country between the Channel and the Frith of Forth was in the hands of the Germans. Several small states were formed, whose number and boundaries were often changed. Some among them, however, became prominent through their more tenacious vitality and power. There was the little Jute kingdom of Kent, which comprehended the earliest civilised part of Britain, and was destined to foster the embryo of the English Rome. Next to Kent, northward and eastward, lay the kingdoms of the East and the South-Saxons, adjacent to Sussex, the realm of the West-Saxons, to whom the task had fallen of defending the Saxon boundary against the Celts, and of extending it. The West-Saxons soon absorbed the smaller Jutish settlements established in their territory. Further northward were the Anglian kingdoms: East-Anglia, north of Essex; Bernicia, between the Forth and the Tees; and later, Deira, between the Tees and the Humber. Of these the last two states sometimes appear as independent, and sometimes as together forming a Northumbrian kingdom. The territory of the Middle-Angles, south of the Humber, was the nucleus of the later Mercia, which grew at the common expense of the neighbouring states, especially of Strathclyde, Wales, and Wessex, and became the largest of the Germanic kingdoms in Britain, embracing nearly all of the Midland country. Oftentimes the Mercian king also ruled little Middlesex with its powerful London, which was at other times a sort of municipal republic.

Nearly all these English kingdoms were formed by the union of smaller tracts, gradually occupied by bands of warlike settlers. On their blending into greater unity, these original districts often retained their boundaries as shires (*scîr*) of the newly formed kingdom; while their head still bore the name of *ealdorman* (prince, lord), a title by which

the German chieftains were designated at their first appearance in Britain. The prince, however, who stood at the head of the united shires was made king.

This introduction of the kingly office, an old Teutonic institution, though one which had not implanted itself in all the German tribes, was the most weighty modification undergone by the constitutional life of the English race in consequence of its establishment in Britain. In other respects the main political forms of the mother-country were retained. They could be easily transplanted from one soil to the other; for they corresponded to the military divisions of the body armed for common defence; and like it, they were originally founded upon the natural division of families and clans. Hence in England we find the same partition of the soil, the same confederation of shires, or hundreds, and communities, as in Germany; and the same social grades; viz.: nobles (*eorlas*), freemen (*ceorlas*), serfs, and slaves. That institution also is not wanting which, from the vivid portrayal of Tacitus,[1] seems to have been especially Teutonic, but which contained the germ of a complete dissolution of Teutonic democracy: the *Comitatus*.

The prince, especially when conspicuous in position and courage, was surrounded by a body of young men of rank who had committed themselves to his personal service. They were his companions, his thegns (*þegnas*, knaves, servants). As it was their highest aim to gain the first place in his retinue, so was it honourable for the lord to have a large following of gallant youths. In peace they added to his pomp; in war, they were a means of defence and a source of fame. It was their most sacred duty to guard his life in battle; nothing was deemed more disgraceful than to forsake the chief in time of need, or to leave the field alive when he had fallen. And the glory which came from the achievements of the followers crowned the head of their prince. They fought for him, as he fought for victory.

From the spoils the lord dealt out to his thegns: horses, weapons, ornaments.

He could also grant them land and estates as reward for service; and the English kings willingly repaid their thegns in a way which secured their future service. Many allot-

[1] Germania. Cap. 12–14.

ments of the public territory were thus turned over to individuals with the approval of the national council; it was converted from *folcland* into *bôcland;* that is, chartered, legally granted land. With the increase of the royal power, the influence of the king's thegns grew in like degree. The servants of the royal household gradually became great dignitaries of the realm. Their political influence steadily expanded. In the national assembly (*Witenagemôt*, Council of the Wise Men), these thegns, richly endowed with lands, formed a stable and very considerable element.

Thus there grew up in the English kingdoms a nobility based upon vassalage and property; and many of the common freemen were received into its ranks. But it suppressed the class of the "churls" as a whole, and it overshadowed the aristocracy of birth.

What the kings did, the lesser lords did on a smaller scale. Vassalage as an accompaniment of the renting or granting of lands formed ever-widening circles. So that at last it became a principle that every man must have a lord.

Inasmuch as land could now be granted with conditions at the pleasure of the grantor, as for instance, the obligation of military service, the germs of the feudal system were living, and they were growing steadily, though more slowly than upon the continent.

At the time of the Norman Conquest they had not reached full development. The old English commonwealth, based upon the union of free men able to bear arms, was then severely shattered, but not overthrown.

Though the political influence of the system of thegnhood made itself widely felt only in the course of time, yet its ethical influence must have been great from the beginning. On the battlefield the idea of the *Comitatus* reached full realisation, a realisation that must have deepened, not only the warlike passions, but also the feelings of piety, of loyalty, and of attachment. These feelings are foreign to no Teutonic race, but they found among the English, earlier than among other tribes, a peculiarly tender and sympathetic expression. To explain this we must turn to the principal features of their inner life.

The depth and intensity of feeling, characteristic of the Teutonic race, seems, among the English of that early time,

to have been accompanied by a certain emotive excitability and a disposition to sentimental exaggeration, which, opposed to stern reality, was wont to take on the character of melancholy. These phases of their character are a remarkable contrast to the unyielding defiance which made them despise peril and laugh at death. But both spring from the same source: the ascendency which the emotional nature asserts in the inner life of the Teuton. How it happens that this tenderness of feeling, which, in modern times, and in truth quite recently, was held to be the inheritance of the German in the narrower sense, especially distinguished the English branch in the antiquity of our history, is not easy to explain. But it seems scarcely doubtful that the germ of this quality was already present in it before the conversion to Christianity, and before the settlement in Britain; although Christianity alone carried it to complete development.

The cult of the Wane-deities, which in the old time had its chief seat among the Ingævones, seems to harmonise well with this tendency of the English mind. For they were friendly, benevolent spirits, whose life and sway closed with the summer time. Both sea and land were pervaded by their beneficent influences; they vouchsafed to men a plenitude of needful things, and a peaceful enjoyment of them. On the coming of winter, they disappeared, died, leaving behind them a mysterious awe. But in the spring the longed-for gods came back again.

Tacitus[1] alludes to the worship of Nerthus, whose name indicates a sea-goddess, but whom he calls *Terra mater*. Her sanctuary was upon an island in the ocean, where her emblem, the chariot covered with a cloth, was guarded. Ing, the ancestor of the Ingævones, was no other than Frea (see p. 2), who originally represented the masculine side of the genial power also embodied in Nerthus.

Deities, in part of a very different nature, had been adopted by the Ingævones, through their intercourse with other Teutonic nations, or, if not unknown to them before, had been admitted to higher honors. The Ingævones, too, had learned, after the precedent of the Istævones, to adore the storm-god Woden, as the chief of all gods. To Woden, in whom the passionateness of the Teutonic genius, the vic-

[1] Germania, Cap. 40.

torious progress of the Teutonic hordes, as well as the intellectual activity of the race seem embodied, the royal dynasties of the English traced back their pedigree. Nor were the English unacquainted with the cult of the fierce sword-god Tiw, whose name suggests the Old-Aryan god of the sky, and who was worshipped with servile humility in the national sanctuary of the Herminones. With the name of Saxneat (sword-companion) Tiw stands, as Woden's son, at the head of the genealogical table of the kings of Essex, with descendants whose names denote the activity of the god in the different phases of a battle. In like manner the god of thunder was worshipped among them: Thunor, the fighter of giants and monsters, the promoter of husbandry, whose feats the armies sang when marching to battle.

Like their political system, the religion of the English tribes may have been at first but little modified by the settlement in Britain. It is probable that the conquest placed, not only the earthly, but the celestial monarchy upon a firmer basis; that it caused men everywhere to regard Woden as the chief of gods. Woden was certainly deemed by them the god of culture, the discoverer of the runes, as by the Scandinavian races to whom they had perhaps communicated his worship. The wise disposer of battles who gave the victory to English armies under leaders descended from himself, deserved thanks before all other gods.

Some older deities may have been gradually forgotten, or their attributes may have been transferred to other gods, or certain phases of their being may have lived on under later names in the form of divine heroes, of demigods.

But the chief change was one by which demigods became earthly heroes. It was the age of the migration of peoples which, in the blending of myth and history, gave birth to the hero-saga.

II.

Of all the Teutonic tribes that established themselves within the boundaries of the Roman empire, the English were in the most favourable position for the preservation of their language and nationality. In Britain, Rome had struck her

roots much less deep than in Gaul or Spain. After the removal of the Roman legions, the Celtic element, had it been left to itself, must have gained the upper hand again; for its strength outside of the cities had remained almost unimpaired. In their ancient home the English tribes had scarcely come into contact with Romans at all. What incitements and products of culture had reached them from Rome or Byzantium through the agency of other German tribes, had not, it is true, been wholly without influence. They had not sufficed, however, to turn the course of organic development into other channels. Indeed, the most important educational factor which, in the olden time, had penetrated from the south into Germany, the Roman alphabet, had become, in the hands of the Teutons, an instrument for the culmination of national tendencies, for the promotion of national characteristics. Much altered in form, furnished with German names, these simple sound-exponents had disguised themselves in the veil of mystery and symbolism (hence the name, runes) and they were turned chiefly to religious uses. After the settlement in Britain no reasons of state led the Teutonic conquerors to lean upon Roman traditions, as in other provinces of the empire. The immigrants in Britain did not live with a native population, permeated by Roman culture, and ready to communicate this culture. Only dumb witnesses, monuments of Roman art and industry, spoke to them of the greatness of the people whose place they had taken. By means of the few Latin words which then came into the English language, as *stræt*, *ceaster*, *coln*, we discern what creations of the antique world appealed most powerfully to the imagination of the conquerors.

More noteworthy in the end was the influence of the Celtic element. Yet philology teaches that, in the first centuries, there was no intellectual and social intercourse between the Britons and Saxons. How could such intercourse have been possible in a struggle which sought to exterminate or to expel, rather than to subdue? The words which found their way from the Celtic vocabulary into the English language during the earlier periods of its growth, consist chiefly of the names of rivers and mountains, with some terms for the utensils of the house, of labour, and the like.

Language, manners, political system, religion, everything

retained, for some time in the English kingdoms, an essentially Teutonic character.

The language which, as far back as our knowledge reaches, named itself *Englisc*,—the collective name of the nation being *Engle* or *Angelcyn*—existed only in a number of dialects whose peculiarities and boundaries, however, do not take definite form for us until a later time. Yet we may, perhaps, assume for the period before us, in connection with the three chief tribes, an Anglian, a Saxon, and a Jutish dialect. The Anglian prevailed in the north and in the greater part of the Midland country; the Saxon, in most regions of the south; and the Jutish, especially in Kent. The most distinct contrast lay between the North-Anglian and the Saxon; whereas, the old Kentish dialect seems to have been more nearly allied, in some respects, to the Anglian, and, as a whole, rather to the Saxon. In the course of time the difference between the north and the south grew wider, many peculiarities appearing at the same time in the Kentish; but in the Midland country, where the Anglian and the Saxon met, there sprang up a mixed, intermediate dialect, with a great variety of constituents.

In spite of the many vicissitudes of its history, the English language preserves to this day the closest relations to the dialects of the Low German mainland, to the Frisian and the Low Saxon. On the other hand, the linguistic connection between Englishmen and their early neighbours who now inhabit South Germany is very much relaxed. The change of habitation worked radical changes in the language; and we must not forget that the great modification of consonants which, from the seventh century onwards, began sharply to divide the High from the Low German stock, remained confined to the southern half of the country.

Toward the close of the sixth century, the English tribes had as yet no literature. The use of their runes was much restricted: single signs or short sentences, proverbs, magic formulas, were scratched upon staves, drinking-horns, swords, ornaments, etc. When lots were cast, three rune-staves were taken up at random, and their meaning was interpreted poetically according to the laws of alliteration.

Law and justice, myth and saga, history and practical wisdom were handed down orally in poetical sayings, or

flowing song. High esteem was paid to the art of "finding sayings rightly bound," that is, in alliterative verse, and of speaking with skill and clearness. The song accompanied by the harp awoke to mirth; at no feast were they wanting:

> The thegn fulfilled his office,
> He that bore in his hand the ale-mug huge,
> And adorned; he poured the pure, sweet liquor.
> Oftimes a singer sang, full merrily sang,
> In Heorot's hall; there was joy of heroes.[1]

Or:

> There was song and sound, where heroes sat,
> Both for Healfdene's battle-leader;
> The glee-wood was touched, the song oft entoned,
> When Hrothgar's scop should tell the hall-cheer
> Along the mead-bench.[2]

The "glee-wood" *(gomenwudu*, and also *gleóbeám)* was the harp, and the player and singer was called *gleóman*, glee-man. The word *scop* had a more special, and a more exalted significance, denoting the poets and singers who dwelt at a court. The *scop* belonged to the thegns and the members of the king's household, and he might hold himself equal to heroes. His art yielded him high praise and rich gifts. Nevertheless a longing for distant scenes, the Teutonic roving impulse, often seized him; and wandering from court to court, everywhere a welcome guest, he brought fresh songs, and tidings of strange peoples and events.

A typical representative of this brotherhood of itinerant singers, named Widsith, or far-traveller, is the hero of an old song, the oldest monument of English poetry that remains to us. It may be received as a glorification of the class to which Widsith belonged, as well as an introduction to the ethnography and dynastic lore of the Teutonic heroic age. From both points of view it deserves our attention. It begins:

Widsith spake; unlocked his word-hoard; he who, of all men, had journeyed most among the tribes and peoples of the earth: oft he received in the hall costly gifts. His race sprang from the Myrgings.[3] He had visited for the first time with Ealhhild,[4] the faithful peace-

[1] *Beowulf*, v. 494–497. [2] *Ibid.*, v. 1063–1067.

[3] The Myrgings, Lat. *Maurungani*, who lived upon and eastward of the Elbe, are sometimes identified with the Swæfs (the North Swabians), and sometimes distinguished from them.

[4] Daughter of the Lombard King Eadwine (Auduin) and wife of Eadgils, king of the Myrgings.

weaver, the abode of the Hreth-king, eastward of Ongle, Eormanric,[1] the grim violator of treaties. He began to speak of many things: "I learned from many men who rule over tribes: each ruler should live uprightly, should govern his inheritance, one eorl after the other, he who desires his throne to thrive. Aetla[2] ruled the Huns; Eormanric, the Goths; Becca, the Banings; and over the Burgundians, Gifica.[3]

Then there follows in close order a long list of earlier and later kings famed in saga, historical, fictitious, and mythical. At the close we hear of the heroic deeds of Offa, king of the Angles, in battle with the Myrgings, and of the long friendship which the two cousins, Hrothwulf and Hrothgar,[4] held, after they had conquered their enemies at Heorot.

The singer next relates what people he has visited (and here several names from the first catalogue appear a second time), and how many kings have been gracious to him. From the Burgundian king, Guðhere (Gunther), he has received rich presents as a reward for his singing. He highly commends the generosity of Aelfwine (Albuin), whom he has met in Italy. Eormanric has given him a costly ring, with which, on his return to the Myrgings, he has honoured his lord, Eadgils, in gratitude for the estate granted him. For that the queen, Ealhhild, daughter of Eadwine, has bestowed a new bounty upon him. He has spread her praise far and wide, and celebrated her as the most excellent of the gold-decked queens who confer gifts.

Finally Widsith tells us how he wandered through the entire realm of the Goths, names the men of Eormanric whom he visited, mentions the hard struggle the Goths had to withstand in the forests of the Vistula against the Huns, who were pressing upon them, and praises the courage of Wudga and Hama. Then he ends his speech, and with it the poem, in the following words:

Thus roving, the glee-men wander through the lands of many men, as their fate wills; they let their needs be known, and utter words of thanks. They find ever, in the north or in the south, some one who understands song, is not niggardly with gifts, who will exalt his fame before his heroes, and show manhood until all things disappear, even

[1] Ermanaric, Ermenrich, king of the Goths, who are also called Hrethgoths. Ongle, or Angle, in Sleswig, is the home of the Angles.

[2] Attila, Etzel.

[3] Gibich, (in whose place Dankrat appears in the Nibelungen Lied), father of Gunther.

[4] Son of Healfdene, king of the Island Danes. Of him, as well as his palace Heorot, we shall learn more in *Beowulf*.

light and life. He who works praise has under heaven high and steady fame.[1]

Widsith was singer and harper by calling. We see in this how he was at once the mediator and the teacher of peoples. The gift of song and poetry was not, however, the monopoly of any guild. Heroes and kings also practised the art. Of Hrothgar it is said that,

> Now the hero, battled-tried, the glee-wood touched,
> The harp's sweet note awoke; and now a song entoned,
> Both sooth and sad; now the great-hearted king
> Told well a wondrous tale.[2]

And in the life of a later ecclesiastical poet,[3] we see that song and playing were cultivated by peasants, and even by freedmen and serfs. At beer-feasts the harp went from hand to hand.

But herein lies the essential difference between that age and our own: the result of poetical activity was not the property and not the production of a single person, but of the community. The work of the individual singer endured only as long as its delivery lasted. He gained personal distinction only as a virtuoso. The permanent elements of what he presented, the material, the ideas, even the style and metre, already existed. The work of the singer was only a ripple in the stream of national poetry. Who can say how much the individual contributed to it, or where in his poetical recitation memory ceased and creative impulse began! In any case the work of the individual lived on only as the ideal possession of the aggregate body of the people, and it soon lost the stamp of originality.

In view of such a development of poetry, we must assume a time when the collective consciousness of a people or race is paramount in its unity; when the intellectual life of each is nourished from the same treasury of views and associations, of myths and sagas; when similar interests stir each breast; and the ethical judgment of all applies itself to the same standard. In such an age the form of poetical expression will also be common to all, necessarily solemn, earnest and simple.

A genuine epic poetry seems first to have grown up among

1 *Widsith*, v. 135–143.
2 *Beowulf*, v. 2107–2110.
3 *Vid.* Chapter IV., on Cædmon.

the Germans in the migration of races. Its precursor among them, as in all cases, was hymnic poetry.

In this oldest form are the germs of later species yet undefined. But form, tone, and manner of presentation correspond chiefly to our definition of lyrical poetry. The song moved onward in short strophes, and it was doubtless arranged for delivery by a chorus, certainly for the coöperation of one. The recital was rich in metaphors, similes, and poetical turns of expression; but even in the narrative parts, it lacked the steadiness, clearness and calmness which we seek in narrative style. A knowledge, on the hearer's part, of the events treated was assumed by the poet. He brought into prominence only isolated points that had impressed him with especial vividness. This poetry was essentially adapted to time and occasion. It was a feature of religious solemnities, or of the popular festivals which accompanied them. It served to express sadness or joy, to praise the gods and heroes, and to herald their deeds or to implore their help, as well as to influence or disclose the future. The march to battle was a religious act, indeed the most solemn and holy of all. The gods whose sacred emblems were borne before the army, and whose deeds were sung, were believed to be actually present; and in every battle-roar, raised "with swords and shields," the warriors hoped to hear the mighty voice of the thunderer. The burial obsequies of kings and heroes were also accompanied by set ceremonies; among them was the singing of dirges of lament and praise for the fallen.

Hymnic poetry drew its chief nourishment from the myth.

As the German heroic age dawned and the hero-saga developed, there arose, beside the hymnic poetry, a freer, more worldly art, distinct from religion; an art in which the awakened historical sense, and the more independent æsthetic impulse found satisfaction; a poetry through which the great figures and events of history were pervaded by a mythical colouring, and which portrayed upon a mysterious and wonder-peopled background, deeds surpassing human strength, passions and sorrows of equal measure, tragical vicissitudes. With the hero-saga appeared the epic.

The style gained in continuity and repose. Though the

incidents related by the singer were known, yet it was the narration of facts, as well as the reproduction of the speeches of the poetical characters that was attractive. Curbing his own impatience, the task of the narrator was to render the single passages of the action according to their natural order. In this way he roused the expectation of his audience, and affected pleasurably their æsthetic sense. The choral mode would have been rather a hindrance than an advantage to this kind of poetry; the strophic form was discarded for the same reason. Without further combination, the lines continuously followed each other.

The whole was, in itself however, a well-rounded epic song of easy compass, and although it was naturally not repeated without some variations of phraseology, its beginning and end were sharply defined. It existed independently, resembling other poems of the same kind only in style and tone, and in relationship of material.

In each of these songs a passage from the life of some hero of saga was taken for representation: as a rule a moment of commanding importance, a deed disclosing the hero's entire strength and greatness of soul, an event involving a decisive turn of his fortunes, in which indeed they were tragically fulfilled. What had gone before was indicated, so far as it concerned what we may call the dramatic course of the action. Otherwise the antecedents were here also assumed to be already known. Hence the representation was terse, only essentials being made conspicuous. The chief importance was attached to the speeches in which the characters, single types wrought at one mould, revealed their nature and the significance of the action. The German *Song of Hildebrand* is an example.

Most of the German peoples apparently rested at this stage of epic poetry. Not until centuries later, long after the reception of Christianity and their permeation by foreign elements of culture, did the High German tribes create, under favourable circumstances, a comprehensive epos; and this, despite its unique merits, does not hide the discordancy between the pagan saga, whence it grew, and the Christian cult in whose ray it thrived. As regards the Franks in Gaul, their immediate contact with an older, much superior civilisation, forced upon them not only a strange religion but a

strange language, at the very time when they reached the summit of their historical achievement. Their ancient hero-saga was lost, save only meagre reminiscences; but the ancient myth worked on the more potently, in that it attached itself to personages in this new, great history; and thus was developed in the new nation a new hero-saga. From the eleventh century onward we also find a grand epos, which, however, no longer belongs to Germanic poetry, and in which the pagan mythical element, as such, is scarcely preceptible.

There were indeed Teutonic races that never attained to an epic in the epoch of the migrations. With the Scandinavians, the hero-saga did not reach the same dignity as the myth until the forms of hymnic poetry, in manifold variety, had become fixed and enduring. The separation from higher culture, the isolation from the arena of history, the life in natural surroundings of colossal savagery and austere beauty, there preserved longer a mental temperament favourable to the myth, while they augmented the untamable passionateness of the people.

A single German branch ascended in that early time to a higher level of epic poetry, a level mid-way between the epic surviving in detached songs, and the epos as it developed, in the highest sense, among the Greeks, and under less favourable conditions (hence less humanly-beautiful), yet quite as vigorously, in France. This branch was the same that subdued Britain.

Imagine the jubilant feeling of the victor whose sword has conquered broad, beautiful lands where a world-ruling nation has left the traces of her activity. Among the ruins of venerable monuments, the relics of a perfected art and a refined culture, he disposes himself in his own way with proud independence. Upon a new and broader field, he re-creates the institutions of his home, and still remaining essentially himself, he grows with his larger aims. In a never-ending struggle, with but occasional interruptions, waged in the south as well as in the north, he drives the native population ever farther westward. He feels himself superior to the Celt despite the higher civilisation which has touched him, and from which the conqueror receives hardly perceptible, yet potent, incitement. The sense of his

own worth, the proud confidence in his own power, grow strong in the opposition of races.

What must the chieftains, just become kings, have felt in their new realms, whose boundaries extended after every victory! They were surrounded by faithful thegns now transformed into great personages, and who, by their own influence, strengthened the authority of the prince.

More refined manners, a fixed ceremonial, grew up by degrees at the English courts. Although life was yet very primitive, it took on a somewhat nobler expression. Poetry constituted its most ideal side. Where all of life had gained in value and meaning, it became the task of poetic art to mirror, not only the violent crises, but the every-day details of this life, to reproduce in the picture those things, events, modes of intercourse, which pleased in reality.

Thus the epic form of the hero-saga was developed in the sixth century, among the English tribes, to that fulness of life indispensable in our conception of the epos.

Those externals, those small happenings of life which poetry presents, are attractive because they are brought into relation with significant acts and occurrences. Nor is the need of a broader interdependence confined to that relation. It involves the very essence of the matter. As in real life, in the state, larger aims are methodically pursued, so in the saga was sought a comprehensive plan. It is desirable to know of the hero whom we have seen act in this or that emergency, how he bore himself on an earlier or later occasion. One important, decisive event calls to mind another resembling it, or forming a sharp contrast with it, and the question arises, if there is not a certain connection between the two. How was some tragic event brought about? What personages contributed to its dénouement? The poetic fancy puts questions like these, and answers them while it adjusts what is heterogeneous and unites what is remote. Thus the hero-saga acquired a richer proportion and closer structure, and simultaneously with the form was fashioned the substance of the epos. And in the whole the people created an idealised image of itself.

In the next chapter we shall see that the epic movement in England did not reach its goal, and that the national epos did not ripen to perfection. The style alone speedily devel-

oped to a certain completeness. Yet it is precisely from some peculiarities of this epic style, wrought, as it was, from the elements of poetic expression transmitted from the hymnic poetry, that we may gain an insight into the causes which arrested the growth of the epos in matter and composition, and which were far from being merely outward obstacles.

The English epos had lost much of the imagery and sensuousness which, from comparison with other literatures, we must presuppose for the old hymnic poetry, but it still retained enough of these qualities, which it employed effectively in its own way.

Where vast natural phenomena and events, or weighty human actions were to be presented, the poet was wont to dwell with happy art upon effective minor features: as at the opening of winter; the approach of an ocean storm, when the garfish glides sportively through the sea, and the gray sea-mew circles ravenously in the air; on the occasion of a sea voyage; at the time of strife and battle, when wolf, raven and eagle gather about the army for their prey, and strike up their horrid notes; when a hero prepares to act or speak, and we hear the clash of his armour or see it resplendent.

Concrete phrases were often employed instead of the direct, but more abstract expressions: "to prepare the murder-bed," for "kill;" "to bear weapons" (helmets, shields, coats-of-mail), instead of "go;" "to guide the craunching keel over the sea-way," instead of "to sail the sea."

Such a diction is, as a matter of course, full of figurative speech, but most of these metaphors, taking root in primitive-naïve and often mythical conception, are so simple and obvious that, as in the language of every-day life, they are not felt to be figurative. Those turns of phrase, too, which impress us as decidedly metaphorical, are seldom very striking and hardly ever especially daring. Winter shackles the billows in ice-fetters; frost and rime, the "gray battle-goers," lock the abodes of men; weapons wait for the decision of speech. The scream of the ravenous beasts of prey, of which we have spoken, is called singing, battle, or even-song. The shriek of rage of the vanquished monster, Grendel, is a horror-song, song without victory, and the sword whizzing about the head sings a greedy battle-song.

A characteristic of the English epos, in contrast with the

Homeric, is the absence of simile. The poet who, comparing the thing and the image, keeps them clearly apart and is even able fondly to delineate the image in all details, to endow it with traits given only for the sake of the picture, not of the thing, proves himself an artist who, not straitened in his material, preserving repose in the midst of commotion, freely choosing with clear insight, seeks to shape the beautiful. Such repose and fine serenity were foreign to the English character. Complete artistic similes are entirely wanting in the English epos; short and obvious ones, such as we often use in daily life, occur, though but rarely: the ship glides away like a bird; Grendel's eyes gleam like the fire, et cetera.

Sensuous and figurative perception seems crystallised in picturesque epithets, and principally in substantive expressions which, making prominent a characteristic, a quality of the person or thing meant, are put appositively beside the real designation, and often take its place. There is an especial abundance of these expressions pertaining to the ocean and the sea-voyage, or to war and the relation of the chieftain to his men. Thus among other things, the ocean is called the "whale-path," "swan-path," "battle of the waves;" the ship, "wave-farer," "sea-wood," "wave-steed;" the warrior, "helmet-bearer;" eagle and raven are conceived together as "host-birds;" the king or prince is called "ring-bestower," "treasure-giver," "gold-friend;" his hall is a "gift-hall;" his seat, the "gift-stool." The body is often named "bone-house," or "bone-vessel," and the mind, "breast-hoard."

To such circumlocution the old English poetry was partial; it massed synonymous expressions for the same idea, as if it would show the most diverse phases of its theme. Besides this was the peculiar effect proceeding from the order of words in speech.

Like most languages which can command some wealth of inflection, and are not coerced into a logical corselet by grammar-masters, the Old English rejoiced in great freedom of construction. How such freedom may serve a delicate, artistic sense or a keen understanding, to obtain the clearest effects, is attested by Greek poets and prose writers and by many among the Latins. For this, however, is necessary that cheerful repose of mind not vouchsafed to the Teutonic races.

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The language of the Old English epic points to a condition of mind where ideas blend, vanish and reappear. Without evident ground as to subject-matter, closely connected words are sometimes separated from each other. In apposition, whose very nature involves a freer arrangement, the separation of appositive words is almost the rule. Not only substantive, but also verbal and adverbial conceptions, are repeated in varying form, and thence proceeds a succession of clauses, essentially the same in meaning, with manifold parallelism of their elements. And the same principle holds in the larger scope. The epic style requires more detail in the execution, and so it often happens in the English epos that single passages in a detailed account of an action or an occurrence are made prominent, dropped, and again taken up. The poet deems himself unable to do justice to his subject; he exhausts his stock of ideas and language; and in spite of all his endeavours, we feel that he does not advance.

There are, besides, frequent unconnected transitions, as well as a certain poverty of particles, which are the cement of sentence-structure, and indicate the delicate shading in the relations of thought.

Further, as he who is entirely filled with his subject is often least able to begin his narrative at the commencement, clearly to designate throughout what is treated, as he who is passionate expects, indeed requires, that the listener shall understand at once who is meant by "he" or "she," so this epic style occasionally puts the pronoun at the head of the sentence, and the word whose place it takes at the end, as if it were appositional; while, on the contrary, where we expect only a pronoun, since an idea just broached is resumed, we not rarely find a sententious paraphrase. The treatment is similar at the resumption of an adverbial element. Numerous interruptions often necessitate a new beginning.

Everywhere we see how were impaired, not indeed the fresh sensuousness in detail, but the lucidity and perspicuity of the whole, by the plenitude of ideas that crowded upon the poet, and the perturbation which they evoked. But this excitement was neither entirely, nor even chiefly, due to a passing emotion in the poet's mind. It was traditional.

It clung to the poetic language as it was transmitted by the hymn to the epic song and the epos. In consequence of this transmission, the poetical style had lost passionateness as well as imagery and sensuousness; but if of the latter qualities it still had enough, of the former there remained too much. The figure of varying repetition itself, which, used with moderation, well becomes the broad flow of Homeric poetry, had been transferred by the English epic to larger relations, in a measure translated to epic proportions, and it thus gave birth to the method of intersecting moments, which, whatever may be its merits, certainly does not excel in clearness.

Nevertheless the style of the Old English epos yields the general impression belonging to this species of poetry. The uniform, stately movement of the rhythmical language, the broad, formula-like periods, which recur especially at the designation of time or of the beginning of a speech, the fond lingering over details, the exhaustive description of occurrences that are not essential to the action—all this is strikingly suggestive of Homer. But the lack in the Old English epic of the clearness and fine completeness of the Homeric, is at least partially made good by the greater directness of expression. The poet's excitement is not seldom imparted to the listener; in situations that seem to justify it, this is very effective. Thus the portrayals of battles, although infinitely poorer in cast and artistic grouping, although much less realistic than the Homeric descriptions, are yet, at times, superior to them, in so far as the demoniac rage of war elicits from the Germanic fancy a crowding affluence of vigorous scenes, hastily projected, in glaring lights or grim half-gloom, and makes us feel as if we were in the midst of the tumult. Nor must we forget that the modes of expression we have tried to analyse, are in a high degree adapted to the elegiac mood, which only too often flowed from the soft melancholy of the Old English temperament, and which readily led to digression and reflection. They are also appropriate to the presentation of tragic situations.

This style is to the Homeric what the Old English heroic verse is to the Greek hexameter. It is based upon a measure which belonged to the antiquity of all Germanic races; namely, the line with eight emphatic syllables, divided

into equal parts by the cæsura. This verse was of venerable origin, being most probably an heirloom from the Indo-European time, and was likewise much used in classical antiquity, where it developed several varieties, the purest of which was the iambic tetrameter.

The peculiarities of versification common to the Teutonic races are: firstly, the metrical law, by which *accent* in language and *arsis* in verse must coincide; secondly, liberty to leave out the *thesis* between two *arses*; thirdly, the use of alliteration, which affects the most emphatic syllables of the line, two in the first and one in the second section, and indicates the unity of the verse, at the same time making prominent the ideas of chief importance.

But while faithfully obeying the general laws of rhythm and alliteration, the English epos did not hold itself bound at all punctiliously to the original scheme of verse. Cases are very frequent in which the line—chiefly in the second half, but also in the first—falls short of the legal number of ictus.

Nor is there an Old English writer on rhythmic art to explain how metre and rhythm are to be brought into unison. Some recent students of English metre, however, not considering the difference between the two, and wanting a broader historical view, have presented theories on the Old English verse that leave its later development quite unexplained, and, what is worse, often ascribe to it an easy, springing gait, entirely opposed to its true character.

For this measure moves majestically on with impassioned emphasis, clinging most closely to the subject-matter; each syllable is uttered with force. The sentence rarely closes with the ending of the verse; it oftener ends with the cæsura, where the joining of a new thought is frequently determined by the alliteration, since one of the conspicuous words of the verse suggests by relationship or contrast of meaning another of the same initiatory sound.

Thus we here meet the same phenomena as in the poetical style: a lack of connectives and fine finish; a great prominence given to single conceptions and ideas; an effect sensuously strong, but not harmonious. The whole gives the impression of a union of deep, glowing passion and a certain unwieldiness.

III.

Widsith, who was in Italy with Alboin, must have "spoken" when the immigration of the German tribes into England had virtually ceased. If his reminiscences reach back to a period when the English still dwelt in their original home, if, generally speaking, the personages who appear in his narration, even when they are brought into mutual relation, partly belong to very diverse times, this merely proves that Widsith is a typical figure: the wandering glee-man of the German hero-age. But if, in the enumeration of peoples, the position as to the primitive abode of the English is authoritative, this may perhaps be explained only by the theory that the ground-work of the poem really descends from this early age, and that consequently it was not composed by a single poet, but grew up gradually; no account is here taken of the interpolations added by an English writer in the Christian time, and which criticism has eliminated.

The same conclusions hold good with regard to all extant remains of the Old English epic.

In the first quarter of the sixth century, when, accordingly, a part of the English races were grappling with the Britons in bloody strife (a greater part still dwelt in Germany), there happened in the coast-lands of the North and Baltic seas a series of events which powerfully seized the imagination of the coast-dwellers. One event above all created a wide-spread sensation. In the years 512–520 Hygelac, king of the Geats (from the modern Götaland in the south of Sweden), undertook a plundering expedition to the lower Rhine. Thereupon Theudebert, the son of the Frankish king Theuderich, advanced against him with an army of Franks and Frisians. A fierce battle ensued which sacrificed many lives on both sides; but the victory remained with the Franks. Hygelac fell, his army was destroyed both on land and water, and the booty already upon the ships was regained by the enemy. In this battle a vassal and relative of Hygelac distinguished himself beyond all others, especially by the boldness with which he finally effected his retreat. He seems to have been a man of gigantic physical strength, and a skilled swimmer. The fame of this battle, and the glory of this thegn, resounded far and wide among

the Geats, Island Danes and Angles on both sides of the sea that separates the Cimbrian peninsula from the Swedish mainland. The deeds of Hygelac's nephew, the son of Ecgtheow, were celebrated in songs. Gradually this hero-figure grew to mythical proportions; he entered upon the inheritance of demi-gods. Beowulf, the son of Ecgtheow, took the place of Beowa, the vanquisher of Grendel.

In England, whither the news of Beowulf and his deeds was borne, presumably by Angles, this hero-saga found the soil most favourable to its growth. Here the myth of Beowa long retained its vitality. The names of Beowa and Grendel were given to hills and lakes whose position and surroundings were suggestive of the myth: as *Beówan hamm* and *Grendles mere*, with the West-Saxons in Wiltshire. The son of Ecgtheow was also celebrated in England as the conqueror of Grendel, as the fighter of the dragon.

Beowulf became the subject of epic song.

This song primarily involved the two principal events of the Beowa myth: the struggle with Grendel and the fight with the dragon. The scene of the first act was laid upon the island of Seeland, the throne-seat of the Danes;[1] of the second, in Beowulf's country among the Geats.

Hrothgar, Healfdene's son, has built for himself a great and splendid hall, which bears the name Heorot, or hart, from its gable-ornament. Here he sits with his warriors upon the mead-bench, and dispenses gifts to them; here the heroes rejoice in the music of harp and song. A monster that dwells in the fens—it is Grendel—comes to disturb this pleasure. Every night he forces his way into the hall, seizes a number of the sleeping thegns, and bears them hence, a bloody prey, to his subterranean dwelling. Vain are the efforts to avert the terror. Thus the richly decked hall stands uninhabitable and useless. This comes to the knowledge of Beowulf. He, with fourteen chosen Geats, crosses the sea to rid Hrothgar of his enemy. He is cordially received by the king, and, in the evening, revels with him and his warriors in the hall. At night-fall the Danes forsake the hall; Beowulf and his Geats dispose themselves there to rest. Then Grendel comes stalking on. He beholds the slumbering heroes, and at once

[1] Historical relations between Geats and Island Danes may have given rise to this location of the saga.

kills one of them. Then he tries to seize Beowulf; but the latter, stretching forth his right hand, clutches him, and the monster forthwith perceives the superhuman strength of the hero. Grendel seeks to flee, but Beowulf clasps him so firmly that, after a desperate struggle, he barely escapes with the loss of an arm, and wounded to the death. Thus is Heorot cleansed. In public token of the victory, the hero places Grendel's arm and shoulder under the great vaulted roof.

In the second part we see Beowulf an old man. For many years after the death of Hygelac he has ruled over the Geats, and now himself stands at the end of his glorious life. He is impelled to undertake a last difficult contest. A fire-spewing dragon, which guards an immense treasure in a rocky cavern near the sea, is to be subdued.

With eleven companions Beowulf betakes himself to the spot where the monster has his lair, commands his men to stay back, strides to the cave, and loudly calling, challenges the enemy to the struggle. The dragon springs out, the strife begins. Beowulf's sword glances off from the scale-armor of his antagonist. Enraged, the dragon, spurting fire, presses upon Beowulf. Beowulf covers himself with his impenetrable shield, and strikes out a second time. His retainers see the danger in which he is, but hide themselves like cowards. One only, Wiglaf, Weohstan's son, hastens to the help of his lord. His shield shrivels before the fire-breath of the dragon; he springs behind the shield of Beowulf, who once more cuts at the enemy. His sword shatters. Furiously the dragon springs upon him, and seizes him by the throat, poisoning his blood with his sharp bite. Then Wiglaf thrusts his sword into the belly of the beast, so that it sinks back. Beowulf draws the knife that hangs at his corselet, and divides the worm in the middle. The enemy is vanquished, the treasure won, but the aged hero himself is wounded to death. He feasts his eyes on the conquered treasures which Wiglaf brings forth to him, gives the young warrior, with his last wishes, his helmet, collar, and corselet, then dies. Wiglaf bewails his death, reproaches the cowards who left the battle-lord in his distress, and has the news of Beowulf's death borne to the royal abode. According to the last command of their ruler, the Geats burn his corpse, and place his ashes with rings and jewels in a mound which is visible from afar to the sea-farers: Hrones-næs.

To this germ were gradually joined several appendages, derived partly from mythical, partly from historical sources, or from the analogy of related sagas. In the first place the struggle with Grendel's mother was appended, as a variation, to the struggle with Grendel.[1] She comes to avenge her son and thereupon, pursued to her subaqueous dwelling by Beowulf, succumbs to a like fate. Many inequalities in the transmitted text show plainly how a single event has been differentiated to two which in the poetic conception were sometimes blended. Beowulf's return from Heorot to Geataland, and his reception by Hygelac were also sung. Other features of Beowulf's, Hrothgar's, and Hygelac's lives were added, accounts of their ancestors, and of battles which they fought. Detailed description, the broader configuration of episodic personages, enlivened the portrayal. All this was borne by the stream of epic song, as well as a mass of other traditions that belonged to the same cycle of sagas, and was connected more or less closely with the Beowulf epos.

Into the midst of this development, which went on during the second half of the sixth, and the following century, came now the promulgation of Christianity.

Its introduction was an event of most far-reaching and potent influence, which, however, was mitigated by its very gradual accomplishment, and revealed, and still reveals, its true significance only in the lapse of centuries. Every new principle can take root only by joining and accommodating itself to what is already established. Christian missionaries in all times have deferred to customs and opinions as they found them, and in greater degree as their position and task were more difficult. Especial consideration was necessary in the English states, where the new doctrine was not transmitted to Germans through a Romanic population, where no coercion of foreign arms forced it upon them, but where, with the aid of native folk-kings, a few missionaries had to accomplish the conversion of the land. Here the foreign elements made themselves felt at first only in church, cloister, and school. On the whole, the national customs and

[1] The story of Beowulf's victory over *both* water-demons seems, at a later period, to have become known to the Norse invaders of England, and through them, to have found its way to Iceland. In this manner I am inclined to account for the striking resemblance between parts of the Old English poem and the Icelandic *Grettis-saga*, to which attention has been called since the appearance of the original text of this volume.

speech remained dominant, and with them the taste for the national songs. Neither the kings nor their thegns would have liked to deny themselves the hearing of the old chants of their glee-men, in the mead-hall, as of old. Thus the English epos lived on; thus Beowulf and his deeds were not lost to song. Naturally, what reminded directly of paganism was gradually set aside, and much was toned down in manner and expression. But the proportion and symmetry of the whole underwent no change; no Christian vestment was thrown over the epic hero.

If the speeches placed in the mouth of this or that personage were at times modified by Christian opinions, if one or another singer added pious reflections to his narrative, still the primitive tone was preserved with the primitive subject-matter.

In the mean time writing as an ordinary vehicle of thought had been introduced into England; a Latin literature had sprung up, which was soon followed by attempts in the vernacular. The popular songs likewise began to be put into writing. What tradition retained of *Beowulf* was written down with much that had only a remoter relation to it; what the writer heard from others and what lived in his own memory were put together and ordered and combined as well as possible. Hence discrepancies in details were inevitable; variations of the same theme were sometimes set beside each other. The scribe himself interfered as composer: sometimes to do away with inequalities, to fill gaps, to give a motive to disconnected passages, or, as he was generally an ecclesiastic, to show his Christian erudition. Grendel, and with him all giants and elves, descend from Cain, according to the interpolator; the Dane-king and his people are once commiserated on account of their paganism, and the like. Thus the text of *Beowulf* took, about the close of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century, substantially the shape in which it has come down to us. To later transcribers it probably owes little besides modernisation of language and verbal corruptions.

Here then appeared for the first time the epos of *Beowulf* as a tangible whole; a whole, in truth, which, when we call it an epos, we may not compare with the *Iliad* or with the French *Song of Roland*. The action not only lacks the re-

quisite unity to justify such a comparison, but (which is most relevant) no true hero-saga of grand, national, historical importance has developed from the mythical germ. Only the personages and the episodes belong to history or the hero-saga. The main action lies yet entirely in the region of myth. Even that theme which first kindled the epic flame, Beowulf's deeds in battle against Theudebert, is treated as a mere accessory.

We have thus in *Beowulf* a half-finished epos, as if benumbed in the midst of its growth. The introduction of Christianity was doubtless one of the causes that destroyed the productive power of epic poetry. The vital continuity of mythical tradition was interrupted; new material and new ideas came gradually to the foreground in the nation's mind. The elements which, though developed simultaneously with the epos, as we have seen, bore the germs of the decay of the epic style, were greatly increasing; viz., the inclination to reflection, to elegiac tenderness. Besides this, the founding of a literature raised a barrier between the learned and and the unlearned. But even had Christianity and literature not been introduced, *Beowulf* would hardly have become an English *Iliad*. Such poems arise only among nations that victoriously maintain ideals of higher culture against inimical forces.

If *Beowulf* is no national poem and no epos in the strict sense, taking matter and composition into account, yet as regards style and tone, character and customs, it is both in a high degree; and it is not without significance that a poem stands at the head of English literature whose subject is the struggle with the waves, and which is permeated by a vivid perception of the sea and of sea life.

A great wealth of poetic feeling is revealed in this poem.

We are charmed by pictures of external things and actions delineated with most realistic freshness, and epic minuteness. Beowulf's voyage to Dane-land, his meeting with the strand-watch, his reception at court, then the struggle with Grendel and Grendel's mother, the gloomy, mysterious aspect of the sea upon whose bottom stands Grendel's dwelling, illumined by a subterranean glow, these and similar scenes are depicted by a master hand.

The characters also appear before us in clear outlines. It

is true they are most simple, and are all of the same mould. No great art is necessary to lay bare the springs of their actions. We learn, however, to feel for, and with them, and some of them compel our admiration. With all their simplicity, they are ennobled by the moral passion which pervades them. A profound and serious conception of what makes man great, if not happy, of what his duty exacts, testifies to the devout spirit of English paganism, a paganism which the Christian doctrine certainly softened, but did not transform in its innermost nature. The ethical essence of this poetry lies principally in the conception of manly virtue, undismayed courage, the stoical encounter with death, silent submission to fate, in the readiness to help others, in the clemency and liberality of the prince toward his thegns, and the self-sacrificing loyalty with which they reward him. The following passages will illustrate some of the qualities mentioned. Beowulf finds himself in extreme danger in the fight with the dragon:

> His comrades gathered not in a group about him,
> The sons of Aethelings; they stood not by him
> With martial virtues. They fled in the forest;
> There hid for life. But one in his heart by grief
> Was stirred: for naught may set aside
> The weal of kindred in one who thinketh well.
> Wiglaf was he, son of Weohstan,
> The dear shield-bearer, chief of the Scylfings,
> Aelfhere's kinsman. He saw his king
> Suffering heat under his helmet, and then
> He thought of the good things granted him by his liege:
> A wealthy estate of the Wægmundings,
> Folk-rights all as his father had them.
> Then could he not hold back; his hand-shield broad
> Of yellow linden seized he. And he drew his sword—
> The ancient heirloom, deemed by men Eanmund's legacy,
> Son of Ohthere . . . .[1]

Also:

> He rushed through the reek of death; to the help
> Of his lord he bore the battle-boss, and spoke
> A few words: "Beowulf, do all well
> As thou saidst of yore in thy youth, thou wouldst
> Not let thy fame sink in thy life.
> O strong in deeds, brave lord, with all thy strength
> Defend thou here thy life! I will help thee."[2]

[1] V. 2596–2612. Wiglaf was descended from the race of Wægmundings, whose original seat was in Geataland; but he was probably born in Sweden, at the time his father Weohstan served the Swedish king Onela; this explains the designation, "chief of the Scylfings," applied to him in v. 2603.

[2] V. 2661–2668.

And further the account of Beowulf's end. At his command Wiglaf has gathered together the treasure of the slaughtered dragon, and brings it to him:

> Bearing the hoard there found he the far famed king,
> His lord, all bloody, lying at life's end.
> He began to sprinkle the prince again
> With water, until the word's point from the coffer
> Of the breast broke through; Beowulf spake,
> As he gazed with grief upon the gold:
> "I thank with words the Ruler of all things,
> The King of Light, the everlasting Lord,
> For the hoard on which I here do look,
> That it was granted me to gain such riches
> For my dear people, ere my death-day came.
> I have now bought this hoard of jewels
> By laying down mine aged life; so grant
> Ye now the people's needs; for I may be
> Here no longer. Have the battle-heroes
> Build a mound, gleaming after the burning,
> On a cliff by the shore. It shall, a memorial
> To my people, tower high on Hrones-næs—
> So that sea-farers seeing call it Beowulf's mount,
> Who drive afar their keels o'er the mists of the floods."
> Then the dauntless king undid from his neck
> The glittering golden ring; he gave to his thegn,
> The young spear-hero, the gold-hued helmet,
> The collar and armour, and bade him use them well;
> "Thou art the last of our lineage, last
> Of the Wægmundings. Death hath driven
> All my kindred, the earls in their might,
> To their fate. I must follow them."[1]

Only a few short fragments of the English epos besides *Beowulf* have been preserved. We take up first the fragment of the *Battle of Finnsburg*.

The connection in which this belongs becomes clear only when we compare it with a song in *Beowulf* which one of Hrothgar's glee-men sings at Heorot the day after the victory over Grendel. Sixty Danes led by Hnæf and Hengest are attacked by Finn, the king of the Frisians, in his own castle. Hnæf falls in the contest, but the Danes defend themselves with heroism for five days. Finn loses nearly all of his men, as well as his sons and brothers-in-law. At last a treaty is brought about. Hnæf's corpse is burnt with great solemnities, of which there is a circumstantial account in *Beowulf*.[2]

[1] V. 2788–2816.
[2] V. 1068 *et seq.*

But the peace is not lasting. Nemesis does not rest until the bloody deed has begotten new deeds of blood. The complications terminate only with the deaths of Hengest and Finn.

The fragment takes us into the midst of the struggle at Finnsburg, whose issue and results are related in *Beowulf*.

The narrative is extraordinarily poetical, vigorous, and animated. Indeed the Old English writings are distinguished by such descriptions of battle. At the beginning of the fragment is a speech of Hengest as follows:

> Then cried the king, young in battle: "This dawns not from the east hither; nor flies a dragon here; yet burn not the horns of this hall; but they come to surprise us. The birds sing; the cricket chirps; the war-wood sounds; shield answers to shaft. Now the full moon shines under clouds; now deeds of woe arise, which the hate of this folk is minded to do. But arouse, my warriors, lift up your hands; think of your strength; fight in the fore-rank, be of courage!"

The battle rages. More than one hero covers the ground. "The raven wandered swart and sallow-brown. Sword-gleam stood, as if Finnsburg were all on fire."

While this epic fragment belongs with *Beowulf* to the saga-cycle of the North and Baltic sea-coast region, the two fragments of *Waldere* betoken the community of thought which, in German antiquity, united the most diverse tribes belonging to that great race. These are the remains of an epos celebrating the well-known Walther of Aquitaine, and the version of the saga, followed here, is essentially the same as that of the Latin poem of Ekkehard of St. Gall, written about two hundred years later, *i. e.*, in the first half of the tenth century.

Besides other treasures, Walther has carried off Hildgund (*Hildgûð*), betrothed to him from earliest youth, from Attila's court where they were tarrying as hostages. Upon the way home he is attacked in the Vosges by Gunther (*Gûðhere*) and his warriors, among whom is Hagen, Walther's boy-comrade. He fights them and is victorious. The fragments partially fill out both pauses coming between the three phases of the contest: Ekkehard gives only two. Single traits betray an independent amplification of the legend, from which we may conclude that it circulated early among the English tribes. They show also the popularity which the legends of

Weland and Theodoric enjoyed, both among Angles and Saxons. The English tradition of Theodoric places him in close relation to Weland's son Widia, who is called "Wudga" in the Widsith-poem.

What is preserved to us of the Old English epic grants but a very inadequate insight into the history of its development, but leaves us to imagine the greatness of the loss which we have here to deplore. And yet how rich may English literature deem itself in this respect when compared with the Old High German!

IV.

Toward the close of the sixth century, the conversion of the English to Christianity was begun by Roman missionaries.

About a century later Christianity was acknowledged as the dominant religion in all the English states. The power of the Archbishop of Canterbury as "*Britanniarum archiepiscopus*" was firmly established; the English church was most intimately united with the papal see. This had cost some struggles. Besides the hostile pagan element, there were other opponents to be vanquished, who seemed, at times, still more dangerous. In the Anglian states of the north, especially in Northumbria, the envoys preaching as delegates from Rome met missionaries of the Irish church. At that time this church was pre-eminent for religious zeal and erudition, but was obnoxious to the papacy because it, as well as the British church, referred its origin to apostolic times, and firmly maintained its own rite and independent organisation against the efforts proceeding from Rome to establish the unity of the church. By the aid of native kings and queens, especially through the vigorous measures of the Northumbrian king Oswiu, England was gained for Catholic unity, and the refractory elements were subdued or set aside. Nevertheless a liberal and truly national spirit was maintained in the English church, and has survived to the present day; a spirit which seemed to slumber at times, but only to break forth again with renewed vigor. This was due to the political public spirit always powerful in England, to the insu-

lar exclusiveness of the country, perhaps, also, to the services which the English princes had rendered to Rome, and to the very enthusiasm for the greatness of the church and for the papacy that actuated Angles and Saxons soon after their conversion.

Although the youngest of all the Christian churches, the English began, toward the close of the seventh century, to signalise itself beyond all others. In no country of the world were there to be found such religious zeal, such warmth and depth of religious sentiment, such a superabundance of religious feeling as in the English parts of Britain. Nowhere was shown such piety toward the papal throne and the grave of the apostles Peter and Paul. This found expression in pilgrimages, in works of Christian charity and of asceticism, in rich gifts to the church, in the erection and endowment of a multitude of convents for men and for women, in which many princesses of royal blood, and even many kings, after sudden renunciation of their crown and the world, gave themselves to prayer and meditation; but above all it was manifested in missionary work. English apostles were unweariedly active among the still pagan German tribes on the continent. They there entered into the inheritance of the Irish monks, whose work they supplemented, corrected, duplicated. Cooperating with the increasing power of the Carlovingian house in France, they labored for the politico-religious unity of the West, among them, notably, that Winfrid whom the Germans reverence as their apostle.

In the domain of literature and science likewise, the English church began to overshadow the Irish, from which, we must concede, it had learned much, and which, at a still later period, gave to the world in John Erigena, a thinker of long unequalled boldness and independence. In the monasteries that covered England and formed each a nucleus of general culture for the surrounding districts, the study of theology was flourishing, and with it the study of those sciences of which the church had preserved a remnant from the ruins of the Roman empire, and which she transmitted to posterity. When classic learning had almost died out in the other countries of western Europe, or was no longer productive, as in Italy, Angles and Saxons increased with strenuous industry the knowledge gained in Rome or brought to them

by learned foreigners, and with happy talent converted it to their own creations, so that they became the teachers of their teachers. At a time when the Italian clergy no longer knew the rules of classic versification, English monks and bishops wrote, and English nuns read, Latin verses beside which the verses that might then have appeared elsewhere seemed almost as barbaric as they themselves appeared beside the lines of a Virgil or a Horace. Manuscripts of the works of classic authors that men began to neglect in other countries, because they did not understand them, were bought up and collected by English pilgrims to Rome, and stored in the libraries of Kent, Wessex, and Northumbria.

Among the abodes of learned culture whose light then illumined England, a few were conspicuous for their influence. The school of Canterbury, which owed its origin to Augustine, the leader of the first Roman mission, gained an enhanced importance when the archbishop, Theodore of Tarsus (668 --690), and his companion, the abbot Hadrian, there diffused a knowledge of the Greek language. From the school of this Hadrian came Aldhelm, born of a noble West-Saxon line about 650, whose exhaustive learning and poetic attainment filled his contemporaries and posterity with admiration. Through Aldhelm, Malmesbury abbey, in northern Wessex, was elevated to an important nursery of culture. Here he was first active as monk, and later as abbot, and here he was buried after his death (709) as Bishop of Sherborne.

The Angle, Biscop Baduking (called Benedict as his church name) founded in Northumbria the closely united cloisters of Wearmouth and Jarrow, whose churches he caused to be erected of stone in the Roman manner by Gallic masons, and adorned with artistic windows and pictures. He enriched their libraries with many books obtained by himself in his frequent pilgrimages to Rome, and he lent an extraordinary attraction to their schools in the papal cantor whom he had placed there as teacher of the art of singing. It was on the territory of the house of Wearmouth that Beda was born, two years before its founding. He became one of the first pupils of Benedict and the most illustrious of all, and he later continued his studies under the guidance of Ceolfrid at Jarrow. Beda became a deacon at an early age, and then a priest, remaining faithful to the monastic life and to

the service of science. In the seclusion and quiet of the home monasteries, especially at Jarrow, he displayed that activity of authorship which made his name renowned far beyond the borders of his own country, and to which only death put an end (735).

Beda's younger friend, Bishop Ecgberht, taught in the school of York. His aim was not less to diffuse learned culture than to restore a strict church discipline, and he founded a rich collection of books. From his school came Alcuin, who later sought a second home in the Frankish empire, where he, more than any other, helped to realise the great plans of Charlemagne for the promotion of learning and education.

The first florescence of English culture was already closing in the time of Alcuin. Its highest splendour is associated with the two names, Aldhelm and Beda.

Both filled with the same enthusiasm for religion and science, both possessed of exhaustive learning, both firmly grounded in the soul of their own nationality, and yet strongly attracted to antique culture, they also supplemented each other in contrasts, which completely set forth for us the collective character of the Christianity of old England. In such an antithesis, Aldhelm represents what we might call the feminine, Beda, the masculine principle. The former, gifted with most delicate feeling and vivid fancy, more versatile, more pliant, more spiritual, was less energetic, less productive; the latter, conspicuous for clearness and simple grandeur of view, less gifted as a poet, explored as a writer of prose the realm of learning in every direction.

Aldhelm celebrated in flowery, at times bombastic and affected, prose the *Praise of Virginity*, which he exemplified by numerous personages from the Bible and legends of the saints (*De laudibus virginitatis sive de virginitate sanctorum*); he also treated the same subject again, and more happily, with slight modifications of material and arrangement, in well-constructed and by no means unpoetical hexameters (*De laude virginum*). He further wrote a hundred poetical enigmas after the precedent of Symposius, but with wider scope, a greater absorption in his subject, and sometimes having the dignity of an impassioned style. They may be compared in many respects to the enigmas of Schiller, and also to some of the

German poet's distichs. He intercalated his collection of enigmas in a prose epistle to King Aldferth of Northumbria, which is essentially a dialogue on the hexameter and the different kinds of metrical feet (*Epistola ad Acircium*). In other poems he did not always employ quantitative, but merely rhythmical verse forms, as well as rhyme. He was fond of alliteration, that ornament of the national English poetry, and massed it at times very effectively. He showed, likewise, a predilection for other metrical diversions, especially the acrostic and telestich. In the choice of his material, not less than in the manner of treating it, in his thoughtful observation of nature and human feeling, in his chaste aversion to what was gross or common, in his leaning to amplification and poetical digression, he proves an intimate relationship with that side of the Old English national character, and of the Old English poesy which was to be especially developed by Christianity: tenderness of spirit imbued with elegiac feeling. Aldhelm is said to have been an excellent musician and singer, and one of the finest poets in the vernacular, one who knew how to condescend to the people and to transport them. Some poems, ascribed to him by the tradition of schools, were sung as late as the twelfth century. We can understand how he came to imitate, in his Latin poems, certain peculiarities of the national versification, which, however, are oftentimes superfluous and disturbing elements. It is likewise conceivable that such a nature often bore itself with poor grace in the majestic garb of Latin prose.

Beda also wrote Latin verses, without great poetical charm, it is true, but for that time correct, harmonious, and not without taste. Most of his hymns and epigrams have been lost, but his book concerning the miracles of Saint Cuthbert (Bishop of Lindisfarne, died 687) is preserved. Far more important than his poetry, in scope and matter, is Beda's prose. It embraces nearly all branches of the learning of that time, and in all departments treated by him, Beda became an authority, often consulted down to the later Middle Ages, and not in his own country alone. His exhaustive commentaries upon various books of the Scriptures, as well as his homilies, were used countless times by later theologists, and have even yielded material for poetry. His writings on natural science, especially his work on cosmography, *De natura rerum*, form-

ed, for a long time, a mine for those authors to whom the way to older sources was unknown or too arduous. He occupied himself also with grammar, rhetoric, and metre. His book, *De arte metrica*, denotes extensive reading, especially of Virgil, and the older Christian poets. His most valuable works, however, are those pertaining to chronology and history: these are his manuals of the computation of time, first the sketch *De temporibus*, then the exhaustive work *De temporum ratione*, to which is annexed a chronicle of the world; his *Martyrologium;* his *Vita beatorum abbatum Wiremuthensium et Girvensium;* his *Life of St. Cuthbert*, whose miracles he had previously sung in verse; but above all, his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. The last work is in five books, and brings the reader down to the year 713. It manifests a love of truth, a diligence in the collection of documental material, and is conspicuous in conception and style for an objectivity, clearness, and simplicity which raise it high above the level of contemporary historical writings. Thus Beda, compared with Aldhelm, embodies the energetic working-power, the positive, historical sense, the love of simplicity and truth, that perhaps form the determining elements in the nobler side of English nationality.

When Beda died, a Christian poetry had already bloomed in the English language. The readiness with which Angles and Saxons accepted Christianity (Mercia under savage, warlike kings resisted longest), the enthusiasm with which they made it a living possession, point to a mental disposition that, in a poetically productive epoch, must necessarily lead to premature attempts to embody, in a poetic form, the new ideas, together with the traditions clinging to them. It is probable that even before English scholars had begun to wrestle with the difficulties of Latin versification, English singers had turned their epic speech and their epic measure into poems to the glory of God, or the praise of biblical heroes. The same hall in which to-day Beowulf's fight with Grendel or the attack at Finnsburg were sung, might resound on the morrow with songs celebrating the six days' work of creation, and taking the place of the pagan cosmogonic hymns. The transition to the new materials was doubtless easy for the glee-men. Epithets of the gods and heroes could often, without change, or with only slight modification, serve for the

God of the Christians, or for the patriarchs and saints. God himself, in his relation to angels and men, was conceived as the almighty prince, as the beloved chieftain; the devil, as the faithless vassal who antagonises his gold-friend; the heavenly throne was the gift-stool of the spirits. In like manner the relation of Christ to his apostles and disciples took form in the popular conception. The apostles are celebrated in a poem of the eighth century as

> Twelve heroes famous far beneath the stars,
> Servants of God: their strength did yield not
> When they hewed in battle on helmet-crest;
> Since they had placed themselves as God,
> Even the high King of heaven, had set the lot.[1]

The fevour with which the English apprehended the feudal relation prompted its transmission into a higher sphere, and this, in turn, caused that earthly relation to be ennobled and deepened. The superabundance of religious sentiment that was a concomitant of Christianity as well as of the English national character, found a convenient medium of expression in the emotive, passionate quality of epic diction, in the massing of synonymous words and periods, in the oscillation of movement.

It may be supposed that the religious poetry, by the employment of existing vocables for new conceptions, by the formation of new verbal, as well as new rhetorical combinations, gradually created a store of words, a phraseology, which, although abutting closely in numberless cases on that of the national epic, nevertheless was distinctive and increased in the same ratio as poetical production in this province. Even new figures of style (although in meagre number) forced their way, in the course of time, from the Latin into the English diction. Scholars, also, as shown by the example of Aldhelm, cultivated the popular poetry, while on the other hand, a glee-man not rarely became a priest. Ultimately many sat upon the benches of the cloister schools who later took up the glee-man's calling. That the Christian national poetry in England was in no way first called into life by the learned, is shown by its genuine popular character in language and verse, and the near relation which it bore to the epos.

[1] *Andreas*, v. 2–6, *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, II. 9.

A beautiful legend transmitted to us by Beda[1] explains, in its own way, while celebrating the earliest Christian poet of England, the origin of this new style.

In the second half of the seventh century there lived in the vicinity of the monastery of Streoneshalh,[2] in Northumbria, a man named Caedmon. The gift of song was denied him, so that he was wont to rise from the banquet and to retire with shame when the harp in its circuit was about to reach him. One evening after such an occasion, he had fallen into slumber in the ox-stable, which was in his charge that night. Then a vision appeared to him in his dream, and a voice commanded him to sing of the beginning of the created world. Thereupon, Caedmon began a song to the glory of God, and sang:

> Now shall we glorify the guardian of heaven's kingdom,
> The Creator's might, and the thought of his mind,
> The deeds of the Father of glory,—how he made the beginning
> Of all wonders, the everlasting Lord:
> First he created for the children of men
> The heavens as a roof, the holy Creator;
> Then the middle region, the Guardian of mankind,
> The everlasting Lord, afterwards established
> The earth, for men, the almighty Ruler.[3]

After awaking, Caedmon repeated all this and added more in the same strain. The knowledge of the miracle that had taken place soon spread, and it reached the monastery, where Caedmon gave proof of the gift which God had bestowed

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[1] *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, IV, c. 24. The same legend re-appears in other places in a modified form.

[2] Better known by its later Danish name of Whitby.

[3] The original is found at the end of an old manuscript of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Beda has a Latin prose version in his text. Aelfred, however, in his English translation of the *Ecclesiastical History*, gives Caedmon's verses again with but slightly deviating meaning, if in modified writing. The Northumbrian original, as well as Beda's prose, are subjoined:

> Nû scylun hergan hefænricæs uard,
> Metudæs mæcti end his môdgidanc,
> Werc uuldurfadur, suê hê uundra gihuæs,
> Êci dryctin, ôr âstelidæ.
> Hê ærist scôp ælda barnum
> Heben til hrôfe, hâleg scepen:
> Thâ middungeard moncynnæs uard,
> Êci dryctin, æfter tiádæ
> Fîrum, foldu, freá allmectig.

Nunc laudare debemus auctorem regni coelestis, potentiam Creatoris et consilium illius, facta Patris gloriae. Quomodo ille, cum sit aeternus Deus, omnium miraculorum auctor exstitit, qui primo filiis hominum coelum pro culmine tecti, dehinc terram custos humani generis omnipotens creavit. On the authenticity of the Northumbrian verses see Appendix A.

on him. Then the Abbess Hild took him into the cloister to dwell, and bade learned men narrate to him the Bible history. Everything that he heard from them, he elaborated and transformed into noble songs, so that his teachers became in turn his listeners. "Thus sang he," says Beda, "of the creation of the world and the beginning of the race of men, and all the history of Genesis; of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the entrance into the promised land; of many other stories of the Holy Scriptures; of the Incarnation of the Lord, his Passion, Resurrection and Ascension; of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the teachings of the apostles; also of the terrors of the future judgment, of the horror of hell-punishment, and the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom, made he many songs; and likewise many others on the mercy and judgment of God; but in all he strove to draw men away from the love of sin, and to incite them to goodness."

Drawing epic, lyrical, didactic matter into its domain Caedmon's poetry seems, according to Beda's account, to have embraced all classes, and most of the range of material to which the Old English religious poetry is in any sense congenial. The question is pertinent if, of the numerous works of Caedmon, nothing besides that short hymn is preserved; if among the considerable remnants of the older ecclesiastical literature, the majority of which have reached us without the names of their authors, one or more are not to be traced to Caedmon. To this inquiry there is no satisfactory answer. It has been customary, since the time of Junius, to connect the poems contained in the Bodleian manuscript, Jun. XI., with Caedmon's name, but belief in the authority for this has been more and more abandoned. In the course of time an ever greater variety of elements and diversity of style have been discovered in the contents of that codex; and at present hardly any one feels justified in ascribing even a part of it to the most ancient Christian poet of England.[1]

Perhaps the combating of an ill-founded hypothesis has even gone too far, and negation has struck a too dogmatical tone. As regards the most extensive and leading poem of the manuscript, and this one only, it is quite possible that a fragmentary and imperfectly transmitted work of Caedmon lies before us; a work mangled, modernised in language,

[1] See Appendix A.

and oftentimes corrupted in details. At all events, this poem might correspond, better than any other, with the conception that we must form of the Caedmonic poetry according to Beda's account, which probably does not lack an historical basis. In spite of the arguments which, in more recent times, have been used to prove the contrary, the style and tone bear the mark of high antiquity, of an art beginning, and not perchance decaying. They give evidence of a poet who belonged to a time of epic productiveness, but who, himself, may or may not have contributed anything to the national epic. The whole treatment is such as we might presuppose of a man who transposed into English verses several biblical books, as they were imparted to him in oral instruction. Finally nearly all the expressions that occur in Caedmon's short hymn are there employed repeatedly and with decided partiality, especially the favourite phrases for the designation of the God-head.

The poem is a poetical paraphrase of *Genesis*, which is preserved only as far as the sacrifice of Abraham, and is broken by several gaps due to mutilation, partly of the present manuscript, and partly of earlier texts. The most important of these gaps, which already existed at a previous stage of the transmission, comprehended the story of the fall of man. It is filled in rather awkwardly by the corresponding parts of a later poem of the same class. As the more modern poet had observed, in his fuller narrative, a different and more artistic plan than his predecessor,[1] the reviser was called upon to strike out some passages. But he forbore to do this, and hence the same motive appears with differing treatment in two rather widely separated places.[2]

According to an ancient theological view, the creation of the world, as described in the account of the six days' work, was for the purpose of restoring an older system destroyed by the revolt of the angels. Man, particularly, was destined to fill the void occasioned in heaven by the fall of Lucifer and his followers. There is connected with this a theory of the ten (or nine) angel hierarchies; especially as it was develop-

[1] The younger poet, namely, had placed the account of the creation and the fall of the angels between God's prohibition to the first of mankind and their temptation by the serpent.—See Appendix A.

[2] The fact of the interpolation in this case is not made less sure by the circumstance that also in other mediæval renderings of *Genesis*, the revolt of the angels is twice related.

ed in the works of Gregory, whence it spread through various channels into mediæval literature. Caedmon does not betray knowledge of such views in his hymn, but was undoubtedly made acquainted with them by his teachers in the convent. However this may be, the poet of the older *Genesis* presents a doxological opening, glorifying God especially as the Creator of the heavenly abodes, after which he begins with a description of angelic joys, joined to a powerful, if somewhat vague, representation of the fall of the angels and its punishment. The sight of the places vacant in the kingdom of heaven has moved God to create the world, which brings the poet to the beginning of the biblical *Genesis*.

From this point on, *Genesis* is his original, which, as far as we can see, he paraphrases to the close with uniform fidelity. He displays but the slightest knowledge, if any, of apocryphal writings.[1] He rarely undertakes omissions and abbreviations of the biblical narrative; and only in passages that must have been unintelligible to Caedmon and the majority of his contemporaries, or that proved quite too rigid for poetical treatment. He gives, for instance, only an extract from the chronology of Noah's posterity (*Gen.* X.), after having exhausted in earlier genealogies his whole rich treasure of circumlocutory phraseology. He nowhere manifests an attempt at general artistic casting; even though he does not twice relate the creation of the first pair (after the Bible), but blends the first two chapters of *Genesis*.[2]

The originality of the poet is revealed only in detail and execution. The simple, terse expression of the scriptural narrative is exchanged for a broad, often impassioned epic style. Adjectives and appositions are crowded, parallel variations of the same idea follow each other, and adverb phrases impressively repeated, often refer to what has already been related and is well known. Like the poets of the English epos, the author of the *Genesis* is fond of employing direct and full quotation in dialogue, while he rather avoids it in monologue. Everywhere he strives for a living assimilation of the material, and for poetic realism and sensuous colouring. Naturally, those passages which lend themselves most easily

[1] See Appendix A.

[2] Owing to a gap in the manuscript we cannot claim this with absolute certainty, although it is highly probable.

to such a treatment are executed with special care. The account of the creation, though brief, is very effective. Our text is unfortunately incomplete, but lines such as these occur:

Yet was the earth
Not green with grass; the ocean was grim
In dreary darkness, the dusky waves,
In eternal night, the far and the near.
Then swift with speed the guardian spirit
Of heaven was borne, all glory-beaming,
Athwart the waters, the swarthy waste:
Then made command the maker of angels,
The Lord of life, to come forth light
Upon the boundless, the ocean broad.
The high king's behest with haste was fulfilled:
For him the light holy was over the waste,
As bade the Creator.[1]

The description of the deluge is rich in effective touches; but several passages in the story of Abraham are especially noteworthy. The paraphrase of the fourteenth chapter of the Bible, a stirring battle-picture with many accessories, shows our poet possessed by that glow of warlike enthusiasm which pervades all Teutonic antiquity.

They gathered together;
Then loud were the lances; the bands of slaughter
Were wroth and raging. The rush expecting,
The swart fowl sang, amid the shaft-darts,
Bedewed of feathers. The fearless warriors,
The heroes hastened, in powerful hordes,
Till now the hosts of nations had come
From afar and near, from north and south,
The helmet decked ones. Then hard was the play,
The change and clangor of clashing death-spears,
A scream of warring, a cry loud of battle.
With hands they drew, the warriors dread,
From shining sheaths their swords ring-hilted,
Of edges doughty.[2]

Nevertheless our poet does not appear in the character of a *scop* or *gleóman* who has donned the cowl and turned to religious poetising. He would have betrayed in other passages as well his preference for the customary epic armour, for weapons and the like, and would have brought out and utilised more prominently the martial element in the bearing

[1] *Genesis*, v. 116–125, *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I. 4.
[2] *Genesis*, v. 1982–1993.

and character of his heroes. The passion which fills the poet is essentially religious. His vocabulary is nowhere richer than when he attempts to render in varying phrase his conception of the God-head.

It is characteristic and conclusive as to the great age of the poem that no sentimentality mars its epic fulness and religious pathos.

> The man began,
> Young in winters, to question Abraham with words:
> "My prince, we have fire here and sword;
> Where is the offering that thou, all-glorious,
> Wouldst bring, a sacrifice burnt to God?"
> Abraham spake: (In all he had willed
> To do what his Lord ordained.)
> "That will the true King, protector of men,
> Find himself as seemeth to him well."
> Steadfast he mounted the steep height then,
> Bearing his son as the Eternal One bade,
> Until he stood on the summit of the high land,
> The place itself which the All-potent had pointed out,
> As the true Creator had taught him with words.[1]

We recognise in the poet a virile, great, and noble nature, the outcome of simple circumstances, who might have borne Caedmon's name with honour. And if Beda prefers Caedmon's poems to those of all later religious poets known to him, we, although not acquainted with those poets, may assume that the Bible-friend in Beda proved stronger than the artist in the forming of this judgment. In no case can the great theologian's high esteem of Caedmon be a ground for ascribing to him traits essentially differing from those of the poet of the *Genesis*.

The author of the *Exodus*[2] reveals quite different characteristics. The matter of the poem is such that at a first glance one might be tempted to call it a well-rounded epic song. The entire narrative deals with the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptian host. Hence only a short section of the biblical account yielded material to the writer, and he has treated this material with great freedom, and adorned it with all the expedients of his art. Looking at the reflections interspersed at the beginning and near the end, one would, as has indeed

[1] *Genesis*, v. 2887–2900, Grein, *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I. 75.
[2] See Appendix A.

happened, take the poem for a poetical sermon. But if we surrender ourselves to the impression of the whole, the homiletic tone becomes quite subordinate to the epic pathos. This fervour finds expression in an amplitude of delineation which does not belong to the fragmentary song, but to the epos. The poet was evidently an epic singer who had turned cleric, or at least Bible-poet, but who had retained his ancient predilection for heroes and arms. In no Old English poetry is the martial passion so marked, so exclusive; and this is the more striking as the action involves no battle at all, but merely a struggle of the Egyptians with the waves. It deals only with the preparations for battle, or with perilous situations, and these suffice to exalt the poet to the highest enthusiasm. Very gorgeous is the description of the two hosts marching in the panoply of war, and especially so is that of the advancing Egyptians. Most effective is the picture of the terror of Israel, dreading a sudden assault. Passages like this in which Moses prepares to speak before the march through the Red Sea are characteristic:

> The man of battle, the bold commander,
> His shield upraised, then sprang before
> The warriors waiting; the folk-leaders bade he
> To stand, to listen, to stay the march
> While the hero's speaking the many should hear.
> The guardian of the land was beginning to speak
> With holy voice, through the martial host:
> With dignity spake the multitude's leader . . . .[1]

The poet does not dwell long on the speeches. He is quite averse to dialogue. His strength lies in the delineation of external actions, and particularly of situations.

He has at command a rich epic phraseology. He is truly prodigal of forms of variation, both in the narrow and the more general sense. His style is more prolix and detailed than that of the *Genesis* poet, but more imaginative and sensuous as well; in short, more poetical.

Unfortunately his work has not come to us entire. Just before the overthrow of the Egyptian army, there is a gap. It embraces the close of an episode, which, breaking into the passage of the Israelites, tells of their ancestors;[2] the

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[1] *Exodus*, v. 252–258, Grein, *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I. 84.
[2] According to the allusion in line 353, there may have been mention of but one fath-

portion preserved treats chiefly of Abraham's sacrifice. Although not unskilfully inserted, this episode seems written in too simple a style for the *Exodus* poet, so that here, too, we perhaps have to do with an interpolation. Comparing it with the corresponding passage in the *Genesis*, we are struck by the greater delicacy and subjectivity of treatment of this insertion, qualities which, in themselves, would not be inconsistent with the epic and martial pathos of the *Exodus* poet.

A paraphrase of the book of *Daniel*, also imperfect (it breaks off at about Chap. V. 22), differs in treatment from the *Genesis* as well as the *Exodus*:[1] from the latter poem, in that it does not present a single detached event, but following the biblical narrative, comprehends a series of events; and from the *Genesis*, for the reason that the poet is less restricted by his text, and chooses systematically from the material before him. His plan, however, is mainly confined to the ideas found in the book of *Daniel:* humble submission to God and devout trust in His word, contrasted with self-sufficient pride and lawless lust; the reward of the former, the punishment of the latter. Hence the poet leaves out entirely such features as have no bearing upon his purpose, and only briefly indicates what is of secondary importance to it, thus throwing the central thought into stronger light. The delineation is less full and sensuous, but more animated than that of the *Exodus*, and shows a less equable epic movement and a stronger admixture of subjective feeling than we find in the *Genesis*. While the poet is, on the whole, rather brief, making little use of direct quotation, and employing little epic detail, he dwells emphatically upon the chief scenes, and develops in them the entire splendour and wealth of his language, as notably in the account of the three men in the fiery furnace.[2]

But in the art of working out a plot, all the writers of religious epics, belonging to that period, are surpassed by the author of *Judith*. If indeed his subject-matter is extraor-

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er (Jacob ?), to whose history the entire extant portion of the episode perhaps formed an introduction. But Abraham may also have been meant.

[1] It is possible that the composer of the *Daniel* was acquainted with the *Exodus*, and wrote with reference to this poem. If this was the case he took no pains to imitate his predecessor.

[2] It is hardly by chance that a second version of this part of the poem is found in the rich collection of poetry contained in the Exeter manuscript (*Codex Exoniensis*). This text, however, diverges entirely in its latter half.

dinarily happy, offering, as it does, a well-rounded plot of almost dramatic interest, still we are wont to consider a judicious choice of material an added merit in the talent that can shape it worthily. Only the close of the poem, little more than a quarter of the whole, is preserved. This fragment, however, produces an impression more like that of the national epos, than is the case with any other religious poetry of that epoch. To a lucid, well-constructed narrative are joined epic profusion, vigour, and animation. In the highest degree effective is the portrayal of Judith's return to Bethulia, of the warlike advance of the Hebrews, of the surprise of the Assyrian camp, the terror of the Assyrian nobles, who dare not disturb their lord in his rest, and finally of the disbandment and flight of the heathen host. If the poet seems stirred by his theme, if he does not refrain from giving a moral judgment, and occasionally anticipates the story, yet he resembles in all this, not only most of the religious, but also the national epic singers of his time.

Religious poets seem early to have indulged in a metrical license which found its way, from the Bible-epics, into the later portions of the popular epos, at least into the interpolations of the revisers. The strictly rhythmical chant of the popular singers did not prevent them, it is true, from frequently falling short of the number of feet required by the metrical scheme, as the measure could be completed by a longer dwelling upon certain syllables or by the help of pauses; but it never allowed them to transcend it. In the religious epics, however, which were doubtless simply recited, not sung, tradition, which permitted a curtailment, could in time easily sanction a redundance. Hence the verses sometimes swell beyond the measure of the eight accents, within fixed limits only, yet yielding many varieties that conform to the unity of no law save in the position of the three alliterative letters. In the *Genesis* [1] and *Exodus*, such lengthened lines are comparatively rare; they are less rare in the *Daniel*, and are especially frequent in the *Judith*, where they are employed in a striking, and by no means inartistic manner.

[1] In which, of course, we cannot include the long interpolation, whose author revels in long verses.

V.

Besides the heroes of the old covenant, those of the new, the apostles, the holy martyrs and confessors, presented themselves to the religious epic as subjects for glorification. From the first centuries of our era onward, Christian tradition had gathered rich material for poetic transmutation, and all Christian nations contributed their share to its increase and development. From the Greek and Latin languages—Latin was usually the medium of versions originally Greek—these legends were transplanted into the national literatures of the different European peoples.

Religious lyrical poetry found an exalted model in the psalms of the Old Testament. These may have early invited to imitation and poetical paraphrase; although the tradition that ascribes such a translation to Aldhelm does not seem to rest on a sure basis. A paraphrase of the fiftieth psalm[1] in the Kentish dialect, not lacking warmth and elevation of tone, dates at the latest from a time before 800, and was certainly no isolated attempt. A rendition of the whole psalter[2] in the West-Saxon dialect appears to be more recent, though hardly as recent as we might be tempted to conclude from the somewhat prosaic diction, and the frequently incorrect versification. It would be hazardous to apply the strictest standard of æsthetic criticism to a work undertaken principally for practical purposes. But the language of this translation is not without ancient elements.

The lyrico-religious mood often found expression in hymns and prayers more freely than in the rendering of psalms. These were partly imitations of ecclesiastical Latin models, and partly independent disposal of known themes, and they occasionally disclose a great intensity of subjective feeling.

A wide field extends between the epic and the lyric, touching sometimes the one, sometimes the other, and including didactic and descriptive poesy. In this domain we find sim-

[1] To this is prefixed an introductory narrative, and an independent close is appended. Published by Dietrich, *Anglosaxonica*, Marburg, 1858, page 3; Grein, *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie*, II. 276.

[2] The greater part of it, from pp. 51–56 on, is preserved in a Parisian manuscript of the eleventh century, which has a later prose translation of the first fifty psalms. Of the lost part of the metrical version, not inconsiderable fragments are found dispersed in an English Benedictine service contained in mss. of the time shortly before and after the Norman Conquest.

ple moral discussions, short poetical sermons on the arrogance and falseness of mankind, or meditations on the vastness and splendour of creation. We also have those poems to which special Christian legends of biblical or unbiblical origin, and sometimes even myths of classical derivation transformed to a Christian basis, furnished the material. To this class belong accounts of the last judgment, and speeches of the saved or rejected soul to the body with which it has been united in life, which it visits every week, and with which it will be reunited for common bliss or common torment on the last day. Descriptions of hell and heaven as revealed in the visions of many saints, and as they took ever more vivid and plastic form in the Christian fancy, also belong there. We find among these poems, too, the ancient tradition of Christ's descent into hell, that attained its definite and, as it were, classical setting in the so-called *Evangelium Nicodemi*;[1] although a stricter theological bias held rather to those outlines of the tradition which could be authenticated in the writings of the fathers.

In this entire range of poetical composition, the English found their sources as well as their models among Christian Latin poets and writers of theological prose. But it was more particularly the homiletic literature which acted upon a class of poetry that, by a blending of narrative, reflection, and admonition, itself bore a decidedly homiletic character. Foremost was the influence of the great Latin fathers, and above all, that of Gregory, to whom Christian England was indebted more than to any other, and whom it venerated as an apostle.

The most peculiar products of old Christian literature were those in which the frequent attribution of a symbolic meaning to natural phenomena determined not only the treatment, but the choice of a subject. This symbolism was chiefly derived from the animal kingdom. The Christian imagination had seized eagerly upon antique, and, especially, Greek tales, in which both fabulous creatures and familiar animals with fabulous qualities were the heroes. In carrying these further,

[1] More exactly in the *Descensus Christi ad inferos*, a work dating possibly from the third century, which, in the first half of the fifth century, was united with the *Gesta Pilati*, an account of the passion and resurrection of Christ, and of the capture and miraculous deliverance of Joseph of Arimathea.

it gave them a deep, mystical sense, an application to the mysteries of religious faith. This animal symbolism played an important part in the art of the earlier Christian centuries. It often appeared in the works of the fathers, and of old Christian poets and writers; it even yielded independent poems. But compendious compilations served to extend it among the most diverse mediæval peoples. In them certain qualities (*natures*, as they were named) of a series of animals were depicted and interpreted. Such a collection was called a *Physiologus*. The numerous *Physiologi* now extant in eastern and western languages, and in several versions, differing in scope, method, and selection, all disclose a fundamental Greek type. Latin was again the medium of promulgation for western Europe. There already existed a Latin *Physiologus* in the fifth century of our era, since a papal decree of the year 496 proscribes as apocryphal and heretical a work of this kind, attributed to St. Ambrose.

The symbolism of such literature was naturally attractive to English poetry, and gave it welcome opportunity for effective description. The beautiful fragment of an Old English *Physiologus*, containing the *Panther*, *Whale*, and a few lines of a third section concerning a marvellous bird, shows us with what charm a truly poetical conception could invest such a subject. The interpretation is the usual one. The panther seeks, after the repast, "a hidden place under the mountain caves," where he sleeps three days, then awakes and, uttering loud, harmonious sounds, emits a lovely fragrance; this is Christ the Risen. The whale, "which is often met unwillingly, cruel and fierce, by sea-farers," induces them, by his island-like repose, to mount him, and then dives with them unexpectedly into the deep; he allures the fishes with his sweet breath and suddenly swallows them; this denotes hell.

The great and really productive period of Old English religious poetry may be included within the years 650 and 800, or about 825. The majority of the works mentioned arose probably during the eighth, or in the beginning of the next century; including also the *Exodus*, the *Daniel*, and the *Judith*, whose chronological order may perhaps, at a later time, be more nearly determined. But the most many-sided, prolific, and we might say, the greatest poet of this time is yet to be considered. He is also the only one who has handed

down his name in his works, and what is more, a part of his life. His name was Cynewulf, or, in his own dialect, Coenewulf.

Cynewulf, like Caedmon, was a Northumbrian.[1]

Conjecture places his birth between 720 and 730; hence he could hardly have outlived the eighth century, and his principal works may be ascribed to its second half.

He belonged to the guild of wandering glee-men, and seems to have rejoiced in high favor and rich gifts at princely courts. He did not lack learning. He read the Latin authors, and sometimes made poor Latin verses himself, which points to a youth passed in the monastery school.

Of the poems which Cynewulf composed as itinerant singer, we have knowledge only of a collection of riddles, if we discard what is doubtful.

We cannot say to what extent English riddle-writing had flourished before Cynewulf, and still less to what extent it grew up from native, popular elements, and how much it was due to the influence of a foreign literature. So much is certain: as in Teutonic antiquity generally, so especially in English antiquity, were found in abundance the many conditions, not only for the production of riddles, but for a characteristic poetical development of them. They lay in the popular view of life and nature, in the foreboding, sombre tone of the epic language, in the nature of the national gnomic verse, and in the fondness for combat in word-subtleties. This originality of poetical treatment appears even in Aldhelm's Latin enigmas, when we compare them with those of Symposius.

Aldhelm's example had great influence, perhaps in certain things, a decisive influence upon Cynewulf. He was probably indebted to him for the idea of arranging a greater number of riddles, without a system, but in such an order that, collectively, they covered a certain range of conceptions. In the first of these, he set his own name to be guessed, not like Aldhelm, in the form of an acrostic, but as a charade.

Cynewulf borrowed many of his themes from Aldhelm as well as Symposius, and probably from other Latin poets,[2] following his originals sometimes freely, sometimes more closely, but always with most lifelike and spontaneous treatment. Other themes came to him through oral tradition,

[1] See Appendix B. [2] *Ibid.*

either from learned or from popular sources. The tale of the dragon, for instance, whose tracks lead the way to the gold-hoard, was taken from the folk-saga, perhaps directly from the epos. In his choice of material, nearly all of which deals with every-day affairs, as well as in his manner of treating it, he discloses a fine mind, a ready sense of the beauties of nature and the wonders of creation. His work also betokens a lively interest in the achievements of culture and the practical details of life, but above all a genuine poetic, creative impulse. A love of weapons and war appears beside an appreciation of the importance of learning. The mead-jug and the wine-skin are likewise remembered, and next to passages of exalted strain, sometimes occur coarse sensuality and naïve innuendo.

Conscious art is joined, in the execution, to the natural impulses of English popular poetry. As with Aldhelm, and still more than with him, the poet's object is not alone, and not chiefly, a play of wit. He is filled with his subject, and what he says of it comes from a loving, enthusiastic spirit. As he borrows verse and diction from the epos, every object becomes for him an epic hero, whose marvellous being the poet wonderingly unveils to us, or who tells of his own fortunes in a feeling, and often pathetic or elegiac tone.

We have room here for only one example from Cynewulf's collection of riddles. It is selected with some reference to the reader's more ready comprehension:

> I was an armed warrior; now a proud one,
> A young hero, decks me with gold and silver,
> And with crooked wire-bows. Men sometimes kiss me;
> Sometimes I call to battle the willing comrades;
> Now a steed doth bear me over the boundaries.
> Now a sea-courser carries me, bright with jewels,
> Over the floods. And now there fills my bosom
> A maiden adorned with rings; or I may be robbed
> Of my gems, and hard and headless lie; or hang
> Prettily on the wall where warriors drink,
> Trimmed with trappings. Sometimes as an ornament brave,
> Folk-warriors wear me on horseback; wind
> From the bosom of a man must I, in gold-hues bright,
> Swallow then. Sometimes to the wine
> I invite with my voice the valiant men;
> Or it rescues the stolen from the robbers' grasp,
> Drives away enemies. Ask what my name is.[1]

[1] No. 15, Grein, *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, II. 376.

The solution is: The horn of a bull.

Several other extant poems have been pronounced works from this early period of Cynewulf's life; though the arguments supporting this opinion are not without attraction, they do not carry convincing proof.

A new phase in Cynewulf's life and writing was due to a remarkable event, of a kind not rare in the fancy of mediæval minds. The poet had grown older; a sad fate had robbed him of friends and patrons. Poor and isolated, he began to give himself up to melancholy, and a gloomy view of life. His conscience reproached him with the frivolity of other days, with worldly thought and endeavour. Then was vouchsafed to him a marvellous vision, one due perhaps to the poet's study of a certain group of Christian Latin poems, but which had none the less the true impress of subjective experience. Cynewulf himself has immortalised this vision in a poem,[1] giving utterance to an irrepressible emotion, but still exhibiting the delicate lines of a beautifully designed composition. It moreover contains single passages that forcibly suggest the style of his riddle-poetry. The holy rood, now glittering with gold and precious stones, now stained with blood, appeared to him in a dream, and addressed him. The tree of victory told him of its fortunes, and the story of the Saviour whom it had been accounted worthy to bear. We hear how, after the burial of Christ, the cross-tree was sunk deep into earth, but later was lifted by servants of God and adorned with gold and silver. The time was come when heroes, far and wide, should pay homage to this sign and worship it: God's son had suffered upon it; therefore it stood forth glorious under the sky, and was able to heal any people that feared it.

Now bid I thee, O man, my dear one,
That this sight thou sayest to men, the sinful:
Reveal with words it is the glory-tree,
On which the great Almighty God,
For mankind's grievous and manifold guilt
Had suffered shame, for Adam's ancient sins
He did taste death; there died the Lord.
But the King arose from the regions of night
With his might, the great, for the help of men.
He ascended to heaven, and will hither again
Come to judge mankind, in this mid-earth.

[1] *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, II. 143. See Appendix B.

On the day of doom, the dreadful Lord,
The Almighty King, with angels will come,
Will doom and condemn, who has power of death,
Each and every one as he even here,
In this life on earth, this short one, has earned it;
Nor shall fearless go forth, before the word
The ruler shall speak, one single sinner.
Where may be the man, he asks the multitude,
Who would come on the cross to death for the King,—
The bitter death taste, that the King once died?
But they fear, and fail to find the words,
To Christ the Saviour, that they shall say.
But need fear none that named shall be,
Who bears in his breast the best of signs;
But heaven's home through the holy cross,
All souls, from earth-ways, shall ever seek
Who think with the Ruler to dwell.[1]

With a light heart Cynewulf prayed to the holy rood: he had found peace and happiness again. His thoughts were directed from that hour to the hereafter, and it was his joy to revere the cross. The poet probably became a monk in consequence of this; but, however that may be, his muse subsequently served religion alone. His later poems mainly develop themes already treated in the poem on the apparition of the cross.

The most distinctive of these poems of the second period is one whose unity German criticism first recognised, and to which it gave the name of *Christ*. In it Cynewulf describes the threefold coming of Christ: his birth, his ascension, and his advent at the last judgment. The poem accordingly consists of three principal parts, the first unfortunately now lacking its beginning. Each part develops in itself a fine structural proportion, in which the narrative proceeds, glowing with feeling and varied by the tints of changing artistic colouring. As Cynewulf drew his subject-matter from the Latin homilies, among others those of Gregory the Great, we are sometimes tempted to pronounce his work a chain of homiletic effusions. The whole is, however, removed to a sphere so poetical that we think rather of a cycle of hymns, having, with a chiefly lyrico-didactic character, epic and even dramatic elements. The ideas are artistically interwoven, the transition being now veiled, now lightly indicated. Sometimes the movement seems arrested, and we feel as if Cynewulf were using, in

[1] V. 95–121.

larger scope, the form of variation of which he is fond in details, and were creating in some degree, a composition with intersecting moments. But the poet advances ever nearer to his goal, although he gathers much upon his way. His work grows steadily in changing sequence of description, dialogue, and impassioned praise; and if it does not strictly conform to any of the received classes of poetry, it is still a monument to a deep religious sentiment and a fine and aspiring spirit.

The intense feeling of love and reverence for Christ and Mary here attains full expression, but without a suggestion of that tone which religious lyrics borrowed in later centuries from the secular love-poetry (*Minnepoesie*). Never has the love of Christ in contrast with the guilt of sinners been depicted more impressively, more touchingly, than here; the terrors of the last judgment have rarely been portrayed with a more vivid pencil. Of all the Old English poems, Cynewulf's *Christ* is perhaps that which reveals, in the most complete and effective manner, the spirit of Christianity, and of Christian Latin poetry.

Latin influence is also evident in syntax and rhetoric. Several figures appear that were either quite unknown to national epic poetry—at least to the older epic—or had gained but small foot-hold, and came rarely into use: as, epanaphora, complexion, and antithesis. In the *Christ* are found for the first time,[1] detailed and ample similes; there are but two, it is true, and these are very old ones that Cynewulf found in his originals. We are, however, reminded of classic poetry by the manner in which, for instance, the well-known gospel-comparison is treated:

> Unlooked for then the earth-dwellers,
> The great day of the mighty God at midnight shall befall,
> The luminous creation, as oft a crafty robber,
> A thief boldly in darkness, in the dusk ventures,
> In the swart night; those bound in sleep,
> The careless heroes, he cunningly falls upon,
> And with evil attacks the unready ones.[2]

But the national style is not fundamentally changed by this adoption of foreign elements. With its affluence of words, it retains its powerful, impassionate, yet somewhat un-

[1] The comparison with Joseph's coat in the *Panther* might be suggested; but the Old English *Physiologus* is hardly of an earlier date than the *Christ*, even if it is the work of Cynewulf, of which I am by no means convinced.

[2] V. 868–875, *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I. 171.

wieldy movement. Certain peculiarities seem even more frequent; such as the employment of variations and the use of pithy circumlocutions instead of pronouns. It is essentially the stylistic mediums of the national epos through which Christian views here find expression. Genuinely popular ideas are sometimes blended with those views; the conception of thegnhood, for instance, is greatly exalted, and not unfrequently in Cynewulf's verse we seem to hear an echo of those tones in which, perhaps, ancient hymns sang the reception of Woden's elect in Walhalla or the world's doom by fire.

Christ's descent into hell, mentioned in the *Christ* in connection with the ascension, was made by Cynewulf the subject of a special poem, whose lofty and thoughtful beginning makes us regret the loss of the remainder. The rendering of the Latin poem of the *Phœnix*, from its relation to the resurrection, belongs to the same class. The original, according to an ancient tradition, the work of Lactantius, presents the antique legend, somewhat altered by time, in a style seemingly illumined by an autumnal glow of classic poesy. The legend is plainly tinged by the Christian spirit, and is modelled in accordance with a Christian symbolism. The poet may have been a Christian himself, or have taken part in one of those tendencies of thought that, issuing from the bosom of pagan antiquity, met those of Christianity half-way. The elegance and precision of expression, characteristic of this poem, are necessarily impaired in Cynewulf's unevenly diffuse treatment; nevertheless the poetic value seems augmented in the English version, which applies the entire wealth of the national style in the service of an intense, devout faith, but disdains new rhetorical mediums as little as does the *Christ*.[1] To the exposition of the myth Cynewulf adds, as a continuation well worthy of it, what is wanting in the original: the application to the chosen servants of the Lord, and then to Christ the Risen himself.

Cynewulf's style appears less influenced by Latin poetry in his legends of the saints.[2] To make up for this,

[1] Especial attention is called to the simile (v. 243–257), which is carried out with more than Homeric detail. Compare with this v. 107 *et seq.* of the quite divergent original.

[2] Certain of its essentially subjective passages must be excepted; as for example, the epilogue to the *Elene*. In this we find, among others, a fairly executed simile (v. 1272–1277) whose parts again forcibly remind us of Cynewulf's *Riddles* No. 2–4.

the spirit of the national epic is so much the more prominent in them. The poet did not, it is true, possess, in any high degree, the talent of epic composition; he cannot be compared in this respect with the author of the *Judith*. His subjectivity often impairs the clearness of the narrative, his invention is meagre as far as *motifs* essential to the action are concerned; we may even say that the action in itself interests him very little in comparison with the feelings and ideas it suggests. On the other hand, the atmosphere of the national epos is precisely that in which he is at home. Whenever he encounters epic situations in his sources, a chord is at once touched in him that must ever have vibrated during his wandering minstrelsy, and that awakens other strains in sympathetic harmony. Then epic ideas and periods, variations and images, crowd upon him in abundance. It is as if youthful impressions had again become living in him; and, as often happens in the round of life, this after-influence of the national epic in Cynewulf grew the more powerful, the nearer he approached the end of his days.

The poet apparently first turned his attention to an English saint, the hermit Guthlac who died in 714. Presumably following oral tradition, he describes rather vaguely, but very amply and feelingly, the life of Guthlac on a lonely height, his cruel temptation by devils, and his consolation by a heavenly messenger until his final reward for the victorious struggle. At a later time Cynewulf added to this poem a continuation,[1] based on a Latin *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* by the monk Felix of Croyland, in which he relates the death of the saint, his last commission to a faithful follower, and its execution. The continuation, another work not fully preserved, surpasses the first part in poetic value. The last division is especially full of feeling, and in the highest degree effective. It contains the journey of Guthlac's servant to the sister of the saint, and the sorrowful message addressed to her. The Latin text furnished merely the occasion for this entire episode.

In *Juliana* Cynewulf delineates a martyr whose existence, strongly doubted by historians, is placed by the legend at the time of the emperor Maximinian. Juliana withstands, not less victoriously than Guthlac, the temptations to which

[1] See Appendix B.

she is exposed. She steadfastly refuses to become the wife of a pagan, and for her chastity and her faith, in whose strength she overcomes the devil in person, she suffers the most terrible tortures, that finally end in her death by the sword. Although the narrative is better conceived in the *Juliana* than in the first part of the *Guthlac*, yet it is often unequal, obscure, and even interrupted by breaks. From this we gather that the poet was too indifferent to the material, as such, and that he was more intent upon delicately modifying or altogether removing crudities in his Latin original, than upon giving to the reader in lucid succession all essential moments of the action.

The two religious epics, the *Andreas* and the *Elene*, are more attractive than those heretofore considered. In these Cynewulf appears perhaps at the summit of his art. It is true that here, too, something is wanting in the composition as a whole. There are inequalities and obscure passages. But the tone, the spirit, in which the Christian fable is conceived, come nearer to the national epos than in any other poems of Cynewulf, and a number of noble descriptions and bold personifications recall to us the best that is preserved of old popular song.

In *Andreas*[1] he represents the man of God, who, according to his Lord's command, hastens to the succour of Matthew, captive in the land of the Mermedonians, and condemned to die. A boat manned by the Saviour himself and two angel mariners, transports him over the sea to Mermedonia. He consoles the prisoner and wondrously gladdens him. But he is himself made captive for this, and is most cruelly tortured. However, strengthened by God, he endures all agonies and works a great miracle which awes the Mermedonians into a belief in God's might, and leads them to conversion. The source of this poem was probably a Greek writing (*Πράξεις Ἀνδρέου καὶ Ματθεία*) which must have been inaccessible to Cynewulf save by the help of learned monks.

The *Elene* (legends of which had probably also come to England in Greek form) relates the search for the cross and the holy nails. This search was instituted by Constantine,

[1] See Appendix B.

on account of his victory gained through that glorious sign, and Saint Helena is miraculously successful in it.

Not until the writing of the *Élene* had Cynewulf entirely fulfilled the task he had set himself in consequence of his vision of the cross. Hence, he recalls, at the close of the poem, that greatest moment of his life, and praises the divine grace that gave him deeper knowledge, and revealed to him the art of song. Feeling himself near the grave, the poet mournfully gazes over the past. As his youthful dream has faded, so everything vanishes from him. The world will pass away, and then will follow the judgment; and varying former descriptions, Cynewulf once more portrays it in brief, incisive language.

The poems of Cynewulf show us the artist with whom Christian ideas have become spontaneous, who is completely filled with the fervour of Christian feeling, and who, at the same time, disposes like a master of the rich legacy of epic diction and perception. His taste is not so cultivated as his faculty of imagination and his power of language. Sometimes his subject-matter is obnoxious to our sense; at other times our ardour is dampened by the ever-crowding outbreaks of the poet's enthusiasm. In the last instance the discord between the old form and the new matter prevents a quite complete enjoyment. Such a discord arises anew at every new stage of culture, and is really avoided in very few products of human art. But where form and matter approach more closely to the present, we are less sensible of the discord between them.

Cynewulf seems nearly related to Aldhelm in temperament and in cast of mind. This relation is even exhibited in small outward peculiarities. As Aldhelm is fond of using alliteration in his Latin verses, so Cynewulf often adorns his English lines with rhyme. As Aldhelm loves acrostics, so Cynewulf likes to play with runes, and through them he has transmitted his name to us in the *Christ*, in the *Juliana*, and in the *Élene*.

VI.

Christianity has, generally speaking, proved favourable to lyrical poetry; it did not, however, serve to promote its rich and original development in England.

The vigorous growth of the hero-saga and of the epic had left, at first, a distinct impress upon all poetic production. Had English culture been left to itself, the hymnic poetry, which still existed beside the epos, would perhaps have yielded a secular lyric, reflecting subjective feeling in independent forms. But the new religion and its culture so severely taxed the assimilative power of the people that the general creative impulse had to yield for a time.

By a sort of tacit compromise the epos was deprived of its specifically pagan elements, without, at the same time, becoming Christian. It took thus a neutral character, which, in the language of a French poet, made it grow old in a prolonged childhood. But hymnic poetry, which was mainly nourished by pagan mythology, was banned and marked for destruction by the professors of the new doctrine. The pagan religious poetry survived only in the mysterious obscurity of magic formulas and the like. On the other hand, the existing lyrical and gnomic elements in the epos gained new importance from the influence of Christianity. The epic metrical forms were transferred to Christian hymns and prayers and translations of the psalms. Their predominance in both lyrical and gnomic verse was thus confirmed, as the *Widsith* early shows, and a distinct division of these classes from each other and from the epic was made more difficult.

A single Old English song in strophic form has come down to us.[1] Most significantly, it is also the only lyric product having direct relation to the epic saga. It plainly betokens a tendency which could not culminate in an unfavourable age.

The song is put into the mouth of a figure of the epic age, the singer Deor, who designates himself as the *scop* of the Heodenings (the Hegelings of the German epos of *Gudrun*). His contemporary and happy rival in art is Heorrenda, the Horant of the *Gudrun*. In the sorrow that weighs upon him, Deor seeks comfort by summoning up a number of the heroes of saga who have suffered and overcome a heavy fate: Weland fettered by Nithhad; Beadohild made pregnant by Weland; the Gothic king Theodoric cast

[1] *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I., 249; Rieger, *Alt-und angelsächsisches Lesebuch*, p. 82.

into exile; the heroes subdued by Eormanric's victory. The close runs:

I was long scop of the Heodenings, dear to my lord; my name was Deor. I had a good retainership, a gracious lord for many years, until this Heorrenda, the song-skilled man, obtained the right of the land, which the protector of eorls granted to me before.—That was withstood; so may this be.[1]

Excluding an interpolation of some length, the poem is run off in six strophes of six lines or less. Each strophe has the following refrain: *þæs ofereode, þisses swâ mæg.*

No relation to the hero-saga is discoverable in the remaining monuments of the Old English lyric; and there probably existed none. They entirely lack proper names, and the allusions regarding persons, places, and events are vague and often very obscure. But that these poems are to be taken as directly expressing each the feelings of a special poet, and not rather those of another person, seems by no means so certain as has been claimed. The epic introduction to the *Wanderer*,[2] as well as the close, may be additions of a later time; because in them is expressed a Christian sentiment and view of life, with a distinctness quite absent from the body of the poem. But that there could have been any thought of making additions like these shows in what light such poems were regarded. Another poem, the *Seafarer*, seems to have been written in the form of a dialogue; though this is indicated merely by a succession of directly opposite views and ideas in repeated alternation.[3]

The non-strophic form, derived from the epos, imposed no external limits upon the poet; hence it lures him to wider range, and yields a style closely resembling the epic. Still more than the epos, this lyrical verse is fond of general propositions, suggested to the poet by his own lot, and from which he returns to his own particular case. The composition is based largely upon the principle of variations; hence repetitions are not wanting that weaken the effect of single fine passages and disturb the symmetry of the whole.

The Old English lyrical feeling knows in reality but one art-form, that of the elegy. Painful longing for vanished

[1] V. 36–42.
[2] *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I., 238.
[3] *Ibid.*, 241.

happiness is its key note. It seeks to voice this mood in reflective and descriptive language. It is fond of the image of physical destruction, as is shown in the *Wanderer*, v. 77 *et seq.* The fine fragment called the *Ruin*[1] is founded entirely upon this theme. It occurs also in the epos; as in *Beowulf*, v. 2255–2266, where we find the lament of that lonely man who is the last of a noble race.

The epic character of the ancient lyric appears especially in this: that the song is less the utterance of a momentary feeling than the portrayal of a lasting state, perhaps the reflection of an entire life, generally that of one isolated or bereft by death or exile of protectors and friends. His roving upon the cold, desolate sea, and his sojourn in the dark forest are graphically painted; and in contrast, the joys of his early home, to which memory returns with longing. The picture of the wanderer, the faithful retainer whose beloved lord lies beneath the earth, is especially touching:

> For that knows he who thus must long forego
> The loving counsel of his dear lord; then oft
> Both sorrow and sleep bind the poor solitary;
> He dreams he clasps and kisses his lord,
> And lays his hand and head upon his knee,
> As when he whilom enjoyed the gift-stool.
> Then awakens again the friendless wanderer,
> Sees before him the fallow waves,
> The sea-birds bathe and spread their feathers;
> Sees fall the snow and frost-rime mingled with hail.
> Then are to him harsher the wounds of his heart;
> In grief for the loved one, sorrow grows anew,
> And memories of kindred pass over his mind;
> He joyfully greets them, gazing eagerly on them.
> But the presence of men again passeth away;
> The sense of the fleeting ones incites not many
> Well-known sayings. Sorrow is renewed
> With him who shall seek very often to send
> The weary spirit over the frozen waves.[2]

Not less indicative than such sorrow and longing as to this poetry and this people, is the manly resignation with which the hero locks his grief in his own breast:

> For sooth, I know
> That this with a hero is high, noble custom,
> That he bindeth firm his bosom's fastness,
> Holds safe and sure his treasure-chamber,

[1] *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I, 248.
[2] *Wanderer*, v. 37–57.

And in his thoughts thinks what he will.
A soul of sadness cannot stand against fate,
Nor can get help a heart full of woe:
In their breast-coffer therefore often bind fast
Men who love honour, their unhappy spirits.[1]

Christianity supplemented this resignation with the solace which springs from faith in God's providence:

Well to him who mercy seeks,
Solace of the father in the heavens, where all security dwells.

The *Seafarer* is quite permeated by Christian views: the contrast of the pains and terrors of the lonely sea-voyage with the longing which yet impels the heart to the sea in spring, is opposed to the contrast of this perishable earthly life with the eternal jubilee of heaven to be won by bold endeavour.

The passion of love is also touched upon in this poetry; if only the love between husband and wife whom fate has parted. As Cynewulf, in his first riddle, makes his wife grieve for her absent "Wolf," so there find utterance in another, and unfortunately very obscure poem, the sorrow and yearning of a wife exiled from her husband to a dark wood.[2] The love of the husband is expressed in a poem[3] in which a staff, inscribed with runes, speaks as messenger of a husband to his spouse. Enemies have driven the man from his people. He now asks his wife to come to him over the sea, when she hears the cuckoo's lament in the wood. She is to let no one dissuade her from the journey, for he is pining for her. He has gold enough and beauteous lands among the strange people; many proud heroes serve him, though, a lonely fugitive, he has forsaken his native land:

The man has now
Overcome the woe. He has no wishes' longing
For steeds nor for jewels nor joys of the mead,
For treasures on earth that an earl may possess,
Daughter of the king, if thee he must spare,
Against the vows by you both given.[4]

Gnomic verse also adapted itself to the metrical system of the epos. There is evidence, it is true, of isolated attempts at strophic division in some extant gnomic poetry.

[1] *Wanderer*, v. 11–18.
[2] *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I., 245.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 246.
[4] *Botschaft des Gemahls* (Message of the Husband), v. 42–47.

Half verses are not infrequently inserted among the long lines: a change which became the groundwork of a distinct form in Scandinavian countries; but which in England, where it was only sporadically used, does not seem to have had any result. In general, long line simply follows long line, and the poet is fond of beginning a new maxim or a chain of them with the second half of a verse. Consistency in this (as especially in the aphorisms of the Cotton manuscript[1]) denotes that the poet worked over a material, itself essentially ancient, for his own purposes.

The original form of this gnomic poetry was long preserved. The poet seems to have set together a number of aphorisms or propositions with no tie save chance sequence of thought, which was often suggested by the alliteration merely. Regard for the requirements of oral delivery, and the patience of the hearers, may have determined the length of the whole. These poems, of which we have four, are a succession of proverbs and short sayings, some trivial, others more noteworthy, at times amplified, and occasionally varied by pretty descriptions. Some of the gnomic poets affect an edifying close. Instead of characterising farther, we give the opening of one of these poems, which in their details are of the highest interest to the historian of human culture:

Frost shall freeze, fire melt wood,
The earth shall green; the ice shall arch,
The water-helm wear, surround wondrously
The earth's green blades. One shall unbind
The frost's hard fetters, the Almighty Father.
The winter shall wane, the weather renew
The summer's hot sky, the sea in motion;
In the deep is longest the dead wave buried.
Into fire shall the holly, divided be the heritage
Of man swept away. Fame is the sweetest.
A king shall buy a queen for a bargain
With beakers and bracelets, and both shall first
Be good with gifts. The man shall grow
In war ever waging, the woman flourish
Beloved of the people, of lenient mood be,
Shall safe hold secrets and soft heart show,
Treasures and steeds give still at the mead-bout;
Before the followers, greet first the prince,
The shield of the nobles, she shall at all times,
The first brimmed cup to the high commander,

[1] *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, II., 346.

Shall speedily hand; the lords of the house shall
Wisdom seek together, counsel sage to learn.
The ship shall be nailed, the shield be bound,
The light board of linden. Beloved is the guest
To the Frisian wife when the float lies still,
His keel is come and her husband home,
She hastens him in, her house provider,
His weedy garment washes, wet with the sea,
In new dress decks him: on land dwells for him
What his love has longed for.[1]

Another form in which the poet treats a given theme with rich illustration may be a less primitive one; as in case of the poems on the various Gifts[2] and on the various Destinies[3] of men. They bear a near relation to some strictly religious poems, as for instance, to the poetical sermons on the mind and the falseness of men. Indeed, it cannot be doubted that there existed especially in this species of literature a direct reciprocal influence between secular and religious poetry.

In this connection may be mentioned a poem which might as well have been named in the last chapter. It introduces to us a wise father teaching his son wisdom and virtue. His precepts embrace, in all, ten sections.[4] The idea of this poem, at least in its most general outlines, may have been taken from the *Proverbia Salomonis*, as is suggested partly by the urgent warning against strange women. It leads us into that circle of mediæval poetry, for which the *Disticha* of Dionysius Cato, as well as oriental writings of a kindred character, yielded a rich material.

The so-called *Rune-song*, although not of very great antiquity in its present form, is most closely related to the old popular poetry. It contains a poetical interpretation of the names of twenty-nine runes. To each of these symbols is devoted a strophe consisting of from two to five, but usually of three, long lines. If there are unmistakable traces of Christian influence in this poem, yet plain tokens of the national myth are not absent, though they appear in the form of the hero-saga. The rune Ing[5] bears the name of the divine ancestor of the Ingævones, and is explained as

[1] *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, II., 341, v. 72–100.
[2] *Ibid.*, I., 204.
[3] *Ibid.*, I., 207.
[4] *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, II., 347.
[5] The phonetic value of this sign was, at a more ancient time, *ng*, later *ing*.

follows: "Ing was first seen among the East-Danes, until he passed over the sea, (eastward?); the chariot rolled after him . . . ."

The chariot was the emblem of the god Ing, or Frea, as well as of the goddess Nerthus.

Paganism lived most tenaciously in formulas of incantation. Some of these have come down in modified shape far into the Middle Ages, and even to modern times. Many such formulas have also been transmitted to us in their original Old English form, but unfortunately they still await thorough collection and consecutive explanation. With all her pains to root out this superstition, the church could not prevent one, in need of protection, from invoking supernatural powers not to be found in the Credo and the martyrologies, nor a man attacked by unexpected disease or misfortune, from having recourse to other exorcisms than those sanctioned by spiritual authority.

One seized by sudden, stinging pains (*færstice*),[1] believes himself wounded by the darts of gigantic women that pass over the land with a loud noise, or by elves or gods; while another, standing covered by his shield when the hags let fly their whistling spears, seeks to cure him. The healer, in performing the requisite ceremonies, relates the occurrence in the epic manner, but often breaks his narrative to conjure the spear to come out, to dissolve, wherever it may be, in skin, flesh, blood, or limb.

Such superstition was better tolerated when it transferred itself to Christian belief; when the Virgin Mary, the apostles and saints, even Christ himself, took the place of the helping, protecting gods and goddesses, as grew general in the course of time. The devil, on the other hand, became the heir of the pagan powers of evil, many of whom lived on apart as servants and followers of the evil one, or in less harmful form, as teasing elves. Monuments are not wanting in which pagan and Christian elements are contiguous. The Virgin Mary is addressed directly after the earth and sky in one of the charms to be spoken at the disenchantment of a field; and in another to the same end, the blessing of the all-ruling, eternal Lord is invoked for the goddess "Erke the mother of the earth."

[1] Compare Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, fourth edition, p. 1039.

VII.

The Old English poetry, as far as we can see, flourished chiefly in the Anglian districts. Caedmon and Cynewulf composed in Northumbria. The Beowulf epos also seems to have been edited at an Anglian court.

But it is a noteworthy phenomenon that the entire Old English poesy, with meagre exceptions, is transmitted to us only in the West-Saxon dialect, or at least in one closely related to the West-Saxon. From this we see, at a glance, that the centre of literary growth was in time transferred from the north toward the south, and also that this second period of literature yielded poetry in no great degree. It was, in one sense, the era of the beginning of prose, while poetry mainly drew from the ancient treasures, which were copied and translated into West-Saxon.

The florescence of poetry and the florescence of prose are separated by an interval of public evil and misfortune, by a dreadful time, whose storms destroyed the Anglian states; whereas Wessex, though grievously shattered, finally came forth from them more powerful than ever.

From the beginning Wessex had been conspicuous among the southern states. Mercia had, indeed, in the course of time, taken from her a large part of her territory, and south of the Thames and Avon, she had maintained her independence against her long dominant neighbour only by hard struggles. But, on the other hand, she nad constantly extended her boundaries westward toward the Britons of Cornwall. Hence, with the accession of Ecgberht (in 800) begins the epoch in which Wessex took the rank of leading power in Britain, more decidedly than any English state had done before. The final overthrow of Mercia was achieved after a long contest. All the English states, as well as the Britons in Wales and Cornwall, recognised the supremacy of Wessex. The smaller Saxon kingdoms and Kent were united to a realm more closely dependent on the ruling power, the West-Saxon king usually granting their crown in fief to his successor.

But a danger from the east began to threaten the state, now beginning to unify, even before the death of Ecgberht, and to make precarious all that had been gained.

The Scandinavian peoples of Norway and Denmark had as yet scarcely been touched at all by the influences of Christianity and European culture, and continued their ancient seafaring and piratical life. At the beginning of the ninth century their inroads grew more extended, more systematic and vigorous. The Northmen became to the Christian nations of that epoch what the Huns had been during the age of the great migrations. The north coast of the German ocean, France, Spain, even the Mediterranean, felt the daring and savage fury of the Vikings. But no country suffered so much from their periodical inroads as England. Here it was not alone the welfare of this or that province, not the numberless monuments and nurseries of culture, which stood in jeopardy; but the struggle, fought with varying success, involved the very life of the state and the future of the collective national culture. Its issue also bore decisively upon the destiny of Europe.

It became obvious, from the year 866, that the Danes were trying to establish themselves upon English soil. They came no longer in the character of mere plunderers, but as conquerors. The English arms, though occasionally victorious, proved upon the whole inadequate to cope with the impetuous onset of their hordes. The billows of invasion rose ever higher, and overflowed ever broader territories. The distress reached its climax in 878, when Ecgberht's youngest grandson had reigned seven years. It was that Aelfred, whom the Middle Ages called England's Darling, but whom after times have named the Great.

Aelfred saw the north, east, and a large part of the middle of his kingdom in the hands of the enemy. Even Wessex herself was now invaded by his devastating hosts. But this extreme danger brought out all the king's heroism and military greatness, as well as the martial ability of the West-Saxons. The height called the "island of Aethelings" (*Aepelinga eige*=Athelney) rose like a natural fortress out of the fen-lands of Somerset. Aelfred betook himself thither with the loyal followers remaining to him. There he intrenched himself, and, maintaining his position against the Danes, he succeeded in forming the nucleus of an army. This was soon enabled by reinforcements from Somerset, Hampshire, and Wiltshire, to advance to the attack, and

achieved a brilliant victory over the Danes. The outcome of this was a treaty by which England was cut into two territories, the boundary between them being a line dividing Mercia, and nearly identical with the original boundary line between the Angles and the southern tribes. The Danes had sway in the north-eastern territory; the south-western territory was subject to the king of the West-Saxons; but in such a manner that the part of Mercia belonging to it had its own laws, its own parliament, and its own ealdorman, and enjoyed a high degree of independence.

As soon as a more peaceful state of affairs permitted it, Aelfred turned his every energy to the internal improvement of his country, which had sadly degenerated. The national weal had vitally suffered. Commerce was ruined. The people had fallen back into savagery. The servants of the church had become worldly in mind and manners. A great number of monasteries had been destroyed or their libraries burned, and their occupants dispersed; uncertainty had come into all relations of life. No king ever had a heavier task before him than Aelfred, and none ever performed it better. He was active in all fields of improvement, helping, building, collecting, ordering. We must pass over what he did as lawgiver and ruler, his work in the construction of cities and fortifications, and the building up of an English fleet. Only those phases of his manifold activity can be touched upon which directly influenced the literature.

The measures which Aelfred took to restore Christian culture and discipline in the church were likewise directed to the advancement of popular education, and the awakening of scholarship in the clergy. Old monasteries were rebuilt; new ones were erected, and often filled with foreign monks, who were to enlighten their English colleagues in right-living as well as learning. Learned and pious men were promoted to high ecclesiastical offices. In the monastery schools the youths were instructed in reading, writing, and religion, including those not destined for the service of the church. It was Aelfred's wish that all who were free-born and did not lack means should learn to read English; those ambitious to advance farther, to enter the church, should have instruction in Latin. With his own children, and in his own house, the king set the entire land an example in the training of youth.

Charlemagne had already been a model to Aelfred's grandfather Ecgberht, in the domains of military art and of politics. He now became a model to Aelfred in another field. Like him the great West-Saxon king shunned no pains and cost to draw able minds into his service, from abroad as well as at home; and if he did not succeed in procuring men so great as those whom we find about Charlemagne, he largely made up this deficiency by his personal zeal, and the enthusiasm with which he directly inspired his co-labourers. Five men are pre-eminent among those who helped to further Aelfred's plans: two Mercians, Werferth, bishop of Worcester, and Plegmund, who was made archbishop of Canterbury, in 890; the Frank, Grimbald, whom Aelfred made abbot of the new minster built beside the old one in Winchester;[1] John, a Saxon from the continent (from Corvey), to whom he entrusted the convent upon the island of Athelney; but nearest to the king stood the Welshman Asser, later bishop of Sherborne. From him Aelfred learned most, though Asser did not willingly forsake the solitude of the convent for the court, and with him he exchanged views most unreservedly. It was this Asser who began, during Aelfred's lifetime, to write a biography of the king, a work which has come down to us, though not in its original form.[2]

Aelfred's own early education had been very defective. He had doubtless become most familiar with the national saga, and the English songs, which he read or heard, had quickened his sense of the grandeur of the Teutonic heroworld, and the latent beauties of his mother-tongue. Not until after middle age did he find leisure amid the numberless duties of government to learn Latin, and to read a number of Latin authors. His appetite for knowledge was extraordinarily keen. But he did not study merely to satisfy this; his object was to revive, by his example, the spirit of learning which had waned and was all but extinct in the land.

Owing to the great scarcity of books at that time, means had to be taken to make certain scientific and theological writings accessible to a larger number of readers; but the knowledge of Latin had almost disappeared from England.

[1] The building was not completed until after Aelfred's death.
[2] See Appendix C.

Hence Aelfred himself began to translate, and he became, not indeed the creator, but a most potent promoter of English prose; he was beyond question the most widely influential writer of his century.

The most ancient monuments of English prose are compilations of laws. The first Christian king in England, Aethelberht of Kent, founded such collections as early as the beginning of the seventh century, and after him Hlothere and Eadric; they were followed by Wihtred, of the same kingdom, in the beginning of the next century. The laws of Ine, the king of Wessex, were written down not long before the year 694; those of the great Offa of Mercia followed after a considerable interval, but they were lost. Aelfred also took up the role of law-giver. His code, based upon a revision and sifting of the laws in force, adopted much from the laws of Aethelberht, as well as from those of Offa, and were probably meant to supplement Ine's compilation. But with all its conservatism, this code does not lack new statutes, and they point to the enhanced power of the kingdom and the increased prominence of the church. More comprehensive and more copious than the earlier codifications, the style of Aelfred's law-book approaches more nearly the boundaries of artistic prose; especially in some portions of the introduction. In this, extracts from the Mosaic Law are joined to citations from the New Testament by brief narrative passages, which lead finally to the exposition of Aelfred's own undertaking.

Records and like documents do not seem to have been written in English before the eighth century.

Continuous translations of single books of the Holy Scriptures, of theological and liturgical works, probably did not exist at all in Aelfred's time; such writings of this kind as had already existed seem to have been no longer extant; as an unfinished translation of the Gospel of John undertaken by Beda near his death. Teachers had to use glosses and interlineary versions in instruction.

But there was already an element in that age for which other nations might well have envied England. This was the beginning of history in the vernacular, in the older parts of the so-called Saxon, or Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle*.

Monks, in the English monasteries, seem early to have

begun to make brief notes relating to contemporary and recent history, which were put down originally upon the edge of the Easter-tables. We must leave the question undecided where the English language was first used in these chronological summaries, whether in Canterbury or Winchester. At all events the ancient ecclesiastical, and later secular capital of the West-Saxon land was certainly the spot where this annual account in the national tongue was continued most uninterruptedly, and where, from such small beginnings, a higher plane was first reached in the writing of annals.

The oldest chronicles are exceedingly meagre and broken. Gradually, though by no means continuously, the years skipped become fewer, and the accounts grow full, clear, and connected. The style of these annals attains a notably loftier impulse in the days of Aethelwulf, when the consciousness of the greatness of Wessex established by Ecgberht, and the influence of the wise and cultured bishop Swithun, combined to inspire the chronicler. The idea of a complete recension of the annals extant seems to have been conceived at the time of Aethelwulf, or at least soon after his death.[1] Many gaps in the older section were filled, many years' reports were enriched by new entries, and even circumstantial narrative[2] was occasionally inserted. The thread of chronicle was spun back from the seventh century as far as the times of Hengest and Horsa. Oral tradition, national saga and poetry, yielded perhaps most of the material for both these extensions of the chronicle. The ancient catalogue of the West-Saxon kings was continued to Aethelwulf, and with the addition of his pedigree back to Cerdic, was placed at the head of this work; while another genealogy of the prince was given near the end, with the account of Aethelwulf's death (855). It extended back far beyond Woden to Noah, and to Adam himself.

The Winchester *Annals* existed in this form, or but slightly extended, when Aelfred ascended the throne; and the

[1] The annals of Canterbury and Winchester were perhaps blended at this time. If the oldest known recension of the West-saxon chronicles is at all based upon such a union (which is possible, though in no respect proved), certainly the reign of Aethelwulf would have been a time better adapted to such a process than any earlier epoch.

[2] See in the report for the year 755 the anticipatory account of King Cynewulf's death; compared with the entry for the year 784, when the event really occurred, this proves unquestionably to be an interpolation, whose groundwork was perhaps an English song.

first years of his reign were as unfavourable to the chronicler as had been the reigns of his brothers who had preceded him. Not until the brilliant victories of 878, and of the subsequent years, had added new nourishment to the national pride, and the sense of security had returned with the stronger might of the realm, did a new epoch dawn for historiography, an epoch created as much by the inspiring power of Aelfred's deeds as by his direct promotion of creative literary endeavour.

The annals from the year 866, that of Aethelred's ascent of the throne, to the year 887, seem to be the work of one mind. Not a single year is passed over, and to several is granted considerable space, especially to the years 871, 878, and 885. The whole has gained a certain roundness and fulness, because the events—nearly all of them episodes in the ever-recurring conflict with the Danes—are taken in their connection, and the thread dropped in one year is resumed in the next. Not only is the style in itself concise; it has a sort of nervous severity and pithy rigour. The construction is often antiquated, and suggests at times the freedom of poetry;[1] though this purely historical prose is far removed from poetry in profusion of language.

The portion extending from 888 to 891, which was added to the West-Saxon annals during the years next following, is less noteworthy, because it relates to an epoch in which England was at peace. But a new revision of the whole was undertaken in those years; and like that of the year 855, it made additional entries in the older portions, and appended an entirely new part to the whole work. Annals of the pre-English history of Britain were added to the list of West-Saxon kings carried down to Aelfred. These annals began with our era, or more exactly with the year 60 B. C. Thus the annals of Winchester received the form in which we know them, the form most perfectly transmitted in the manuscript[2] presented by Archbishop Parker to Corpus Christi college, Cambridge. The original part of this MS., written by a single hand, extends to the year 891.

[1] Compare the following sentence (year 876) Earle, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, page 78: *and hie þá under þám hie nihtes bestælon þære fierde se gehorsoda here into Escanceaster.* "And they meanwhile, during the night, stole away from the host (English), the mounted host (Danes) into Exeter." *Fierd* is the standing expression for the English, as *here* for the Danish army.

[2] In the library of that college it is marked M.C.C.C.C.CLXXIII. See Appendix C.

The additions made for the older epoch in this recension[1] seem, unlike the material added in the edition of 855, to have been taken almost exclusively from Latin sources, and especially from Beda's English church history, or rather the chronological outlines appended to it. This circumstance particularly betrays Aelfred's direct influence upon the work.

Meanwhile the great king had begun his own literary activity in about the year 886, and this was not without influence upon the compilers who took part in the revision of the annals.

A work whose loss cannot be sufficiently deplored was a first fruit of this activity. It was Aelfred's hand-book, devised for him by Asser, in which were entered all passages that especially impressed him in his reading. Notes by his own hand on the history of his people and house gave it special value.

The list of Aelfred's writings that have reached our own time begins, it would seem, with his translation, or more exactly, adaptation, of the history of the Spanish presbyter Orosius (*Historiarum libri VII*). The original was written at the suggestion of St. Augustine, and under the inspiration of some of the ideas laid down in the treatise on the *City of God*. About the year 418 it came from the hand of a sympathetic and somewhat gifted man, but a man of no deep learning nor greatness of mind. It was only an uncritical and hasty compilation from older authorities; nevertheless, it was the first attempt at universal history, composed at a standing-point free from national limitations, though naturally within the bounds of Christian belief. Its compendious character, and its constant portrayal of the world's history as a history of suffering and crime, by which Christendom was to be freed from the reproach of having caused the decay of the Roman Empire, insured the great success which it enjoyed in the Middle Ages. The entirely unclassical form of the work impaired this success the less, as the subject-matter was enlivened by feeling, and at times decked with rhetorical ornament. Thus Orosius became the chief

[1] This seems to have been the last instituted in Winchester itself. Her writers were thereafter content to continue the chronicles, and to have copies made of the existing one. Such a copy was made in, or soon after, the year 887; for Asser, who wrote in 893 shows acquaintance with the annals, in his *Gesta Alfredi*, only to the year 887. See Appendix C.

authority in ancient history for those epochs which, for any reason, were unable to draw from purer springs, and he maintained for centuries a standing at least equal to that of more trustworthy historians, at a time when they had become accessible.

By the translation of this work, King Aelfred gave his countrymen a manual of history from which they could learn much, in spite of its defects. But he had tried the powers of the English language not a little in grappling with the periods of a writer whose style was often far from lucid and simple.

This task of moulding the English in translation was, as a whole, infinitely harder than it would be to-day, but in some respects it was not so difficult. Less developed than now, the language was, therefore, less exacting; and if the rate of its movement, corresponding to the movement of the thought, was slower, it could be turned the more readily into new channels. Chiefly, however, the task was made less difficult by the method of mediæval translators, who did not put themselves in the place of their author as we require of their successors, but put the author in their own place.

This was true of no translator more than of Aelfred, and from various causes.

Firstly, the naïve and almost childlike point of view, to which the abstraction of surrounding realities was difficult, on account of meagre experience and practice of comparison.

Secondly, Aelfred's imperfect knowledge of Latin. As we certainly know was the case in some of his translations, so in all, he doubtless made use of the assistance of his more learned friends in seeking to interpret his original. He sought help especially of Asser; but this could not shield him from several strange misconceptions, and often gave him an insight merely into the general sense and not into the particulars of a difficult passage.

A final cause lay in the personal tastes and the pedagogic considerations of the king, who wished above all to be useful to his people, and rightly measured its needs by his own.

This explains why Aelfred, even when he translates most

accurately, sometimes "sets word for word," sometimes only "thought for thought,"[1] but usually diverges much more radically from his author.

Aelfred omits and abbreviates much in the *Orosius*, especially toward the close. The seven books of the original are condensed to six, and the account of the last period, from Augustus on, is little more than briefly summarised. He also makes a number of additions of varying length: useful facts procured from other sources, and remarks designed to set the relations of antiquity more clearly before his countrymen, or flowing unconsciously from his pen because they come from his heart.

We quote but one of the shorter insertions, which also found its way into the *Annals* of Winchester.[2] Speaking of Titus, Aelfred remarks: "He was of such a right spirit that he said he considered that day lost in which he had done no good thing."[3]

By far the most important of the longer additions are those in the geographical introduction in the first chapter of the first book. They consist of a complete description of all the countries in which the Teutonic tongue prevailed at Aelfred's time, and a full narrative of the travels of two voyagers, which the king wrote down from their own lips. One of these, a Norwegian named Ohthere, had quite circumnavigated the coast of Scandinavia in his travels, and had even penetrated to the White Sea; the other, named Wulfstan, had sailed from Slesvig to Frische Haff. The geographical and ethnographical details of both accounts are exceedingly interesting, and their style is attractive, clear, and concrete. It was long, unfortunately, before Aelfred had a successor in this field.

Aelfred's English is freest and most spontaneous in these excursions. But it can nowhere be called either stiff or unidiomatic, even though it leaves, here and there, an impression of childlike awkwardness. His attempt to conform the loosely constructed English speech to the close and interwoven structure of the Latin yields many anacoluthons and pleonasms. This applies especially to conjunctions,

[1] Compare the prefaces to Aelfred's *Gregorius* and his *Boëthius*. The latter has *hwilum hé sette word be worde, hwilum andgit of andgite.*

[2] See entry for the year 81, Earle, p. 8.

[3] VI., 8, ed. Thorpe, p. 480.

and to those cases in which, for the sake of clearness, a noun is made to follow, after a short interval, the pronoun which, according to strict logic, should represent it; a device, it is true, which later writers still often employ.[1]

After the *Orosius*, Aelfred applied himself to the *Historia ecclesiastica Anglorum* of his great countryman Beda, a national treasure to whose great worth he, perhaps more than any other, was in a position to do justice. Such freedom of treatment as he had bestowed upon the universal history of the Spaniard was not demanded in this work of English origin, and dealing with English affairs. Beda's narrative, it is true, would have permitted the insertion of much new matter, since his history of the south is much inferior in thoroughness and trustworthiness to that of the north, and Aelfred was especially called and adapted to this work. But whether the royal author did not like to repeat in another place what he had already put down in his hand-book, or whether some other ground prevailed, Aelfred observed an abstinence in this respect, which posterity can only regret. The deep interest felt by his age and people in the history of Wessex and the south generally, found but a negative utterance in his rendering. Among his many abridgments and omissions, he discarded not only nearly all the judicial measures given by Beda, but also left untranslated matter regarding northern affairs.[2]

Perhaps Aelfred was impelled to bring this work to a close because a new and more difficult task was already beginning to stimulate him. If we do not err, the translation of Boëthius' *De consolatione philosophiae* should here be mentioned. Whatever the antiquarian, the geographer, or the ethnologist may think of this work, in the history of culture in its wider sense, it holds the first rank among Aelfred's writings.

In the Middle Ages we encounter traces of the "last of the Romans," at every step. His *Consolation of Philosophy*, especially, is one of those books by which many generations of mediæval readers were both edified, and practised in

[1] Compare *Orosius*, II., 4 ed. Thorpe, p. 306: *hê þâ Cirus hŷ þær besyrode*, "he then, Cyrus, surprised them there"; *heó þá seó cwên Dameris mid mycelre gnornunge ymb þæs cyninges slege, hyre suna, ðencende wæs*, "she then, Queen Tomyris, was thinking, with much grief, of the death of the king, her son."

[2] Attention has already been called to the error which passed from Aelfred's Beda (I., 9,) into the *Annals* of Winchester (see the year 381). The compiler connected the statement of the Latin chronological epitome with that of the English text of the *Ecclesiastical History*.

philosophical thinking, and by which the mediæval languages were educated to the expression of abstract thought. The work was not unworthy of such a distinguished lot. It gleams with a last ray of classical antiquity: in its contents, in which the purest ethical doctrines of the ancient schools of philosophy—notably of the Neo-platonists and Stoics—are united with the spirit of Roman manliness; in its form, especially the poetical parts, which agreeably interrupt the analytical and argumentative prose. And to that last glimmer of vanishing light is wedded the glowing dawn of a new day, of Christianity; whose spirit, though nowhere directly confessed, yet permeates the whole, and distinctly embodies the ideas of divine providence and love. Add to this the advantage of a noble yet popular presentation in the form of a dialogue, and the charm of the scene which shows us the senator Boëthius in his dungeon, where, as her disciple, he is solaced by philosophy.

We can imagine with what feelings, in the evening of his eventful life, the manly heart of the great Saxon king absorbed those noble teachings of antiquity on the worthlessness of earthly happiness, on the supreme good, on the wise man's duty of composure in the struggle of life; and how he felt impelled to reveal this treasure to his people.

The task was not easy. With particular reference to this work, William of Malmesbury informs us that Aelfred had Asser explain the original, and then wrote down the substance of it in English. This translation is most remarkable. We see how the king labours with the thoughts of his author and with his own language. Misconceptions are not excluded, and he could never have finished the whole, had he not likewise here permitted himself the greatest freedom of treatment.

But though the English *Boëthius* lacks original insertions of such evident moment as those in the first chapter of the *Orosius*, yet the rendering as a whole is perhaps more original than that translation. At the very beginning Aelfred contracts and transposes the order. He omits entire sections. Whenever opportunity offers, he gives the thought of the Roman a more decidedly Christian colouring. He oftentimes replaces antique allusions, whose meaning he does not always understand, by allusions to persons and things well

known to every Englishman. Fabricius, whose name reminds him of *faber*, becomes the smith Weland. The *classica saeva*, the savage war-trumpets, which did not resound in the golden age, are transformed into a *sciphere*, a thing which had not yet been heard of in that age of innocence,[1] nor in England before 787. Oftentimes—and this is most important—he gives himself up to the flood of thoughts which a word of Boëthius has inspired, and writes from his own experience and his own heart.

That the Roman philosopher suffers in this treatment is undeniable. Many a nice shade of thought, to say nothing of language, is effaced by Aelfred, and the king's learning was not rich and ripe enough to replace this loss by something of equal value. But the translator possessed, in a high degree, that delicacy and elevation of mind which proceeds from a noble spirit; and when he lets us view the recesses of his kingly heart, he vouchsafes to us a most touching and beautiful spectacle. A passage may be cited here which Aelfred's recent biographer has justly made prominent:

> For that I wished material to exercise my power upon it, that my talents and my power become not forgotten and concealed. For every craft and every power soon becomes old and passes to oblivion, if it is without wisdom; for no man may accomplish any craft without wisdom. For what is done through folly no one can ever reckon for craft. This I can now especially say: that I have longed to live worthily, so long as I lived, and after my life, to leave my memory in good works to the men who were after me.[2]

Boëthius required in the translator a poet as well as a prose writer. Aelfred first translated the *Metra* into prose, a prose not without the charms of fresh naïveté, warmth, and exalted feeling.

Both extant manuscripts of the Old English *Boëthius* open with a preface—hardly from Aelfred's pen—in which we are told that the king afterwards recast this prose into verse. And one of them actually contains the *Metra* reproduced in alliterative verse; this is the older manuscript, belonging to the tenth century, while the younger one presents the whole version in prose. Under these circumstances, only very weighty reasons could justify us in denying to Aelfred the

[1] *Boët.*, II., Metr. 5: Aelfred, c. 15, ed. Samuel Fox, p. 48. *Sciphere* is the standing expression in the annals for a Danish marauding or war fleet.

[2] Aelfred's *Boëthius*, c. 17, ed. S. Fox, p. 60.

credit of the poetical rendering of the *Metra*. The arguments upon which such an opinion has hitherto been based seem to proceed more from a leaning toward skepticism than from the critical spirit. If the poetical version rests upon, and makes use of the same words as the prose translation (so far as rhythm and alliteration permit), this is precisely what we might have expected. The misconceptions in the English prose, however, that have been charged to the poet, are explained, on closer examination, in a way that places him in a more favourable light than the prose writer. This result could hardly be anticipated, when we consider that Aelfred most probably put into verse, unaided, a part of the translation made with Asser's help.

After the foregoing, great poetical worth will not be looked for in the rhythmical version of Boëthius' *Metra*. The prose version not rarely stirs the feelings and imagination more strongly than the metrical. Yet the latter does not utterly lack warmth and life, nor even a certain loftiness of strain; but while we do not deny these qualities to Aelfred's verse, we really take them in a quite different sense from that applied to the poetry of the previous age. One who passes from Cynewulf to Aelfred cannot evade a feeling of complete disenchantment. Aelfred entirely lacked the creative poetic fancy, and the innate charm of the verses of Boëthius is so fundamentally different from that of Old English poetry, that even the most gifted in England would have failed to make Boëthius speak in the national style. The laws of alliteration are somewhat deranged in Aelfred's long lines; but perhaps less so than one might naturally expect. The diction is much farther removed from the ancient epos than the verse.

If it was an inner need that moved the king to translate the *Consolatio philosophiae*, it was chiefly a regard for the wants of his people that impelled him to his next, and so far as we know, his last literary work. From philosophy Aelfred turned to practical theology, when he undertook to translate the *Regula Pastoralis* of the great Gregory.

The pope who had begun the conversion of England to Christianity, had, as we saw, exerted a decisive influence, by his writings, upon the theology as well as the poetry of that country. His work on *Pastoral Care* presents, in four sec-

tions, the ideal of a Christian pastor; and in showing how he should attain to his office, how he should live and teach, and finally, how he is to preserve humility by self-examination, it offered, though in a form of no marked elegance, a treasure of excellent teachings, from which the mediæval church long drew. Augustine, as Gregory's missionary, had brought this work with him to England. There was now most urgent need that these teachings of Gregory should be again inculcated in the English clergy. Hence Aelfred took great pains to circulate his translation as widely as possible; he had a copy of it presented to every bishop of his realm.

The translation was more carefully prepared than any of Aelfred's previous versions. Of all his translations, this follows the text most faithfully; and though it often takes the nature of paraphrase, yet there are no deviations that could stamp the work as a free imitation. Aelfred's style here is not at its best, because it is less characteristic. The historian of literature will be perhaps least interested in this work, however important it may be to the philologist, for whom its value is enhanced by the purity of its text.

The high estimation in which Aelfred himself held the work appears in the long preface that he prefixed to it. This preface is in the form of a letter to each of his bishops. He speaks longingly of the old and happy times when the English kings obeyed God and his messengers, and prospered in knowledge as well as war; when the clergy had zeal both to teach and to learn, and for all that belongs to God's service; and when foreigners sought wisdom and learning in England. To this he contrasts the present, when the Angles must get knowledge abroad, if they would have it at all. But he thanks God that his kingdom is better off as regards education than it was a few years before. Then there were very few this side of the Humber who could understand their rituals, or could even translate a letter from Latin into English, and there were probably not many beyond the Humber. "So few were there," he says, "that I cannot remember a single one south of the Thames, when I came to the throne." He urgently exhorts his bishops to break away from worldly affairs as often as possible, in order to fortify the knowledge which God has given them. Then follow the considerations which led him to his undertaking.

Bishop Werferth was induced by Aelfred to translate another and more popular work by Gregory, his *Dialogues*. In a talk with his friend, Deacon Peter, the pope gives first an account of the life and miracles of Italian saints; the entire second book is justly devoted to one of these, St. Benedict of Nursia. It further treats (in the fourth book) of the life of the soul after death, as it was revealed in a series of visions transmitted to the author either orally or in writing. The dialogue as such is nowhere very lifelike, and the farther the work proceeds, the more it becomes a mere pretext. Notwithstanding this defect, Gregory's *Dialogues* had a most enduring influence on the mediæval mind and poetry, and more particularly the last book, which has a peculiar interest for the theologian on account of the doctrine of purgatory developed in it. Owing to this influence, if for no other reason, we must desire to become acquainted with the Old English version of the work, which has thus far slumbered in manuscript, but which, we may now hope, will soon be published.

Five of the last ten years of Aelfred's reign (893–897) were filled with the renewed tumult of war. The situation of the West-Saxon kingdom again became most perilous in the struggle with the Scandinavian pirates, who found willing confederates in the English Danes. But this time also the danger passed. The defensive resources of the kingdom on land, and still more on the sea, had been fostered by the king during the years of peace. The defenders brilliantly proved their might under their heroic leader, and at last drove the enemy back to his old bounds.

The increased consciousness of power which pervaded the English people, issuing victorious from this struggle, is strikingly indicated by the exalted strain in which the English annals describe the occurrences of this period. The entries for the years 894–897, written beyond question by the same author, narrate these warlike events in lucid sequence, and in a briskly animated, vigorous, and somewhat martial style; and in them the subjectivity of the historian finds utterance for the first time. The personality that confronts us is one of strong and great qualities. The writer has little to report concerning times of peace. The last years of Aelfred's reign are hardly noticed in his annals.

The king's death draws from him the following short notice:

901. This year died Aelfred Athulfing six nights before All-Hallow-mass. He was king over all the Angle-folk, save the portion under the rule of the Danes. And he held the kingdom thirty years, less a half year. And King Eadweard, his son, came to the throne. [1]

In the beginning of the new reign, the operations of Aetheling Aethelwald alone give him occasion for a full and stirring narrative. But with the year 910, his account begins, in unison with the growing military interest, to regain a uniformly broad and graphic vigour, and to illustrate again the peculiar manner of this writer, which is maintained to the year 924. This year saw Eadweard reach the summit of his power; it saw him who had extended the kingdom to the Humber, chosen "lord and father," *i. e.*, overlord, by the Angles and Danes of Northumbria, by the Britons of Strathclyde, and even by the Scots. With it the chronicler comes to a close. The age to which he belonged deserves to live on in the record of a man whom, from the few pages that he handed down, we may prize as one of the first, perhaps the greatest, of the prose writers of Old England.

VIII.

What Aelfred had said of learning: that formerly foreigners had sought it among the Angles, and now the Angles must get it in foreign lands, was, in a certain sense, also true of religious poetry. The most notable English poem of this class from the ninth century has unfortunately reached us in fragments; this work (which we will call the later *Genesis*) is so exceptional among the English national poems, in language, style, and verse, and, as recent researches teach, is so intimately related to continental Saxon art, that it seems like a foreign growth acclimated in England. But whether it be a translation and revision of an old Saxon poem, as has been claimed, or whether, as seems to me more probable, we have here the work of an Old Saxon, resident in England,[2] the spirit

[1] Earl, p. 96.—Athulfing means son of Athulf, an abbreviation of Aethelwulf.

[2] I know of no reason, for instance, why we should not here have in mind that John to whom Aelfred entrusted the monastery at Aethelney, and who perhaps came over from Corvey. The *Genesis* might easily have been written in the last quarter of the ninth century. The theory of a translation seems to me the more improbable one, because an Englishman who failed to change *wær* (wâr) into *sêð* would doubtless have overlooked more Germanisms than can be found in the poem; but see Appendix A.

that lives in this *Genesis* is in either case the same as that which fills the German *Heliand*, and has flowed from it. Northern Germany, where that venerable poem had sprung as a splendid blossom from the germs of English learning and power of expression scattered by English missionaries, gave back in the *Genesis* a part of what it had received from the great sister nation upon the British island.[1]

The complete poem certainly included the creation, especially that of man, as well as the fall. What may have followed this, cannot be known. The poet's chief source was the *De spiritalis historiae gestis, libri V.* which were composed in Latin hexameters by Bishop Avitus, of Vienne, in about the last decade of the fifth century; and we may note that the five books have the following heads: *De origine mundi, De originali peccato, De sententia dei, De diluvio mundi, De transitu maris rubri.* But it should not be overlooked that in that part of our *Genesis* corresponding to the second of these books, use has also been made of the third.

The author of the later *Genesis* owes to Avitus, who was one of the greatest Middle Latin religious poets, that more artistic arrangement by which the narrative of the fall of the angels, contrary to the usual order, is inserted as an episode between the creation and the fall of the first pair. To him he is indebted for several important motives, expressive traits of characterisation, and effective passages. In the main, however, he is very free in the use of his text; and his work does not lack original features, which, for the present, may be regarded as products of his own individuality.

The poet was a broadly humane man, of profound and noble qualities. He recasts his characters with warm sympathy, and when possible, endows them with his own generous spirit. He takes pains to represent the sin of the first pair as arising from no ignoble motives, but as the result of an error, and this he does with true tragic power. Even his Satan is not without dignity and greatness. Some of that quenchless power dwells in him which filled Widukind, the great antagonist of Charlemagne, or perhaps some English aetheling, who rebelled against a royal father or brother; thus the idea of the *comitatus* is taken up and vividly pre-

[1] That, on the other hand, English writings still drifted to the continent, in and after Aelfred's time, is proved by the discovery in Cassel of a leaf from a manuscript of Aelfred's *Regula pastoralis*, which is said to date from the ninth century.

sented. Criticism has long discerned a true Miltonic ring in the speeches put into the mouth of Satan; as in the following, which precedes his fall:

> Why shall I toil? said he, surely need is none
> To have him for my head! With my hands I can
> As many wonders work; I have power wide
> To make a mightier throne, to build for me
> A higher one in heaven. Why shall I do his hest
> And for his favour sue, bend to him in such fealty?
> A god like him, as great, may I become.
> Strong comrades stand by me, who in the strife,
> Heroes stern-hearted, will not fail their help;
> Me have they chosen for chief, unchallenged warriors!
> Such may one call to counsel, with such may capture
> His followers; they are my fervent friends,
> In their thoughts faithful; of them I may be chieftain,
> Reign in this realm. It seemeth me not right
> That I in aught, for anything,
> For any good, to God need cringe.
> I will no longer live his vassal![1]

Profoundness of psychological insight is a chief characteristic of this poet, and though he is too fond of the forms of variation,[2] his copious, somewhat verbose style, while not sentimental, is much more sympathetic and tender than Caedmon's. As regards versification, the poet is partial to the long-drawn lines designated on page 47 as "lengthened" verses; in this he exactly resembles the author of the *Heliand*, and he has often very happily adapted from him a number of formal terms and phrases, though occasionally without regarding differences of dialect, or the demands of alliteration.

This later *Genesis* is only in so far preserved as it was used in the tenth century to fill a gap in the elder, we will say, Caedmonic *Genesis*.[3]

The English poetry of this period was also influenced by Scandinavian art. The poem called *Rhyme-song* contrasts, in eighty-seven verses, a past full of wealth, power, and happiness, with a mournful present, and this in a manner some-

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[1] *Genesis*, v. 278–291. *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I. 9.

[2] This peculiarity seems to have been augmented by later interpolations, which brought an element very much like confusion into the text.

[3] This gap chiefly comprised God's prohibition to the first pair and the fall. Moreover, the sheet containing the beginning of the interpolation fails in the extant manuscript of the so-called Caedmonic poetry. Hence we have but 617 lines of the later *Genesis* poetry (*Gen.* 235–851).

times vividly suggesting Job.[1] Besides alliteration, the method of rhyming words at the cæsura with the end of the line is here consistently employed, a device seldom encountered in the older English poetry. Attention has justly been called to the fact that this is exactly the form which was known in Scandinavia by the term of *Runhenda*, and critics have conjectured that the *Rhyme-song* was the result of an influence proceeding from an Old Norse poet of the tenth century, from Egil Skalagrimsson, who visited England twice, enjoyed a certain celebrity at Aethelstan's court, and composed a poem in this form in Northumbria. This seems to have yielded no immediate results. Rhyme reappeared in later popular poems, often in the place of alliteration, and always in close conjunction with its decay, but rhyme is not to be referred to this source.

The early native tradition of ecclesiastical poetry had not yet died out; but the works it inspired bear distinct tokens of artistic decline.

A poem which we may fitly name *The Fallen Angels*[2]—its subject is the torments and despair of heavenly spirits changed to devils—shows us two characteristics of the Old English poetical style carried to excess. And first the form of variation applied to larger proportions: the poet constantly makes the fallen spirits, especially their chief, break forth in lamentations, and dwell upon the bliss of heaven which they have lost, the terror and misery for which they have bartered it, God's might and goodness, and their own folly. At the same time he introduces his admonitions in the manner of the homilist, and at the close he again contrasts the pictures of hell and of heaven, where the angels revel in the jubilee of bliss, and whither all men will go who take care to obey the Saviour. In closest union with this form of variation, and not less sustained, there is an elegiac passion whose tenderness had never yet been equalled. Stirred by the rage of his pain and longing, Satan falls quite out of character and speaks like a weak, repentant sinner, at times even like a preacher. It would hardly have occurred to the poet of another age to make the devil run on in such rhapsodies as these:

[1] See especially c. 29 and 30 of the biblical book.
[2] *Satan*, v. 1–365, *Bibliothek. der ags. Poesie*, I. 129.

O, thou glory of the Lord! Guardian of heaven's hosts!
O, thou might of the Creator! O, thou mid-circle!
O, thou bright day of splendour! O, thou jubilee of God!
O, ye hosts of angels! O, thou highest heaven!
O, that I am shut from the everlasting jubilee!
That I cannot reach my hands again up to heaven,
Nor still look, as before, with my eyes upward,
Nor hear, with my ears ever again
The clear-ringing strains of the heavenly trumpets! [1]

The poet lacks neither thought nor power of expression; yet he was not able, or did not try, to join his thoughts in continuous movement. At the end the reader finds himself where he began. The energy with which certain theological views are held and developed is also noteworthy; and the poem mirrors a fairly defined conception of hell, as well as the life and deeds of the devil. Christ the Son of God appears always as the Creator; the attack led by the fallen angels concerns him, and they are conquered by him. Satan, too, has a son, whom he wishes to elevate to the place of Christ.[2]

Fragments only are preserved of a poem[3] which, in both contents and scope, has been compared with Cynewulf's *Christ*. The chief theme of the portion extant is Christ's descent and resurrection, to which is joined, rather briefly, an account of the ascension and last judgment. It begins with an episode discussing the former state of the devils, who are stricken with terror at the coming of Christ. Whether the descent took such great prominence in the complete poem as it receives in the fragment, cannot be decided. Possibly this was shared by the passion; possibly the poet had treated the weightier points[4] of the Credo relating to Christ. In the latter case his poem was, as a whole, similar to the *Christ* of Cynewulf, though it adapted itself more closely to the popular Christian conceptions. The remembrance of Cynewulf causes us to feel still more strongly that the execution of the plan is comparatively weak, though the poem is far from wanting in happy turns of thought. The

[1] *Satan*, v. 164–172, *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I. 133–4.

[2] Compare v. 63–4: Segdest us tô sôðe, þæt þîn sunu wære—meotod moncynnes: hafastu nu mâre sûsel.

[3] *Satan*, v. 366–664, *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I. 139.

[4] It is, however, quite possible that this fragment is a homily for Easter Sunday, bereft only of its beginning, and with contents similar to the prose homily in the *Blickling Homilies* (Ed. Morris, p. 83, *et seq.*).

diction, too, has lost fulness and power, if not copiousness. It reveals, however, the peculiarities of the ancient poetical style.

Another and much shorter fragment[1] discloses Christ tempted by Satan. The portrayal of the temptation is characteristic, though it deviates from the biblical account, more, perhaps, in expression than meaning. After it is past, Christ sends the devil into hell to measure it, so that he may better appreciate that he has opposed God. Satan executes this commission, and finds that the distance from the bottom of hell to its gates is a hundred thousand leagues. It is uncertain whether this fragment, also, is only a poetical homily on the temptation of Christ, or whether it belongs to a greater whole.

These three poems probably appeared about the end of the ninth, or the beginning of the following century. The two last-named works, as we have them, may have been mutilated not long after this. They were then appended as a connected whole to the *Fallen Angels*, in the existing manuscript, containing the *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Daniel*.

At about the time to which these products of the religious muse belong, gnomic verses were produced in the form of dialogues. Oral contests in speaking aphorisms or riddles, or in vaunting, seem to be founded on an ancient and deep-rooted Germanic custom. In the Old Norse Wafthruðnismâl, Odhin, with the name Gangradr, visits Wafthruðnir, the wisest and strongest of all the giants, and both measure their wisdom in a contest whose prize is the life of the loser. But in England the gnomic dialogue, as far as preserved, is connected with an oriental legend, at least with a legend developed within the range of Judaism. This legend contrasts King Salomon with Marcolis, the Mercury, or Hermes, of classical antiquity, as the representative of Jewish wisdom, against the wisdom and eloquence of the heathen. In the place of Marcolis,[2] however, we find Saturnus. This change is perhaps best explained by a confusion of Marcolis with Malcol (Milcol, Milcom); that is, Moloch, the oriental Saturn. Two incomplete poetical dialogues between Salomon

[1] *Satan*, v. 665–773, *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I. 147.

[2] As a rule, the name *Marcolis*, among the Teutonic races, was exchanged for the seemingly more idiomatic forms of *Marculf* or *Marcolf*; thence in Middle High German *Morolf*.

and Saturnus have come down to us. Their contents are Christian throughout, though blended with both Rabbinical and Germanic elements.

In the first,[1] Saturnus, the Chaldean eorl, who has studied the books of all the islands, and mastered the learning of Libya, as well as the history of India, comes to Salomon for instruction on the power and dignity of the Paternoster. Salomon imparts this in an obscure, mysterious manner, and represents a contest in which the devil is overcome by the different letters of the Paternoster, both conceived as runes and personified. Then are depicted the practices of the evil spirits, who do not conceal their relationship with the Teutonic elves. At the end, Saturnus finds, to his satisfaction, that Salomon surpasses him in wisdom.

The second,[2] and perhaps somewhat older, dialogue opens with an introduction in epic style, in which Marculf's home is mentioned among the many lands which Saturnus has traversed. Question and answer, statement and counter-statement follow each other rapidly in the dialogue, one question being sometimes answered by another. In a tone which often becomes mystical, it treats the most diverse subjects, as death, old age, the unequal distribution of gifts and goods, fate, the fall of the angels, and the struggle of the good and of the evil principles for the conquest of man.

These dialogues, and, in a still greater degree, the religious poems usually collected under the name of *Satan*, approach more nearly the style and tone proper to the poetry of the preceding age, than does the English version of Boëthius's *Metra*. In the latter, a new element, related to prose, asserts itself. But it is chiefly in the treatment of alliterative verse that the *Metra* differ from the poems just considered. If in *Salomon and Saturnus* and in *Satan*, the number and position of the alliterative letters do not always agree with the ancient rule, yet the relative emphasis of the syllables in alliteration is regarded with hardly an exception. But in Boëthius many liberties are taken in this respect. Such deviations had often appeared singly, but accumulated, they betoken the decline of the old metrical art.

This decline is still more significantly shown in the psalm

[1] Kemble, *Salomon and Saturnus*, p. 134–154, *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, II. 354–359.

[2] Kemble, p. 154–176, *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, II. 360–368.

translation (see p. 48) which appeared in this period, though hardly after the middle of the tenth century.[1] The chief rules of ancient alliteration are violated with indifference, and the diction entirely lacks swing and copiousness. Hence this translation forms a stage of transition to the sort of rhythmic and alliterative prose which began to prevail toward the close of the tenth century.

But the true spirit of national verse and poetic enthusiasm did not expire at once in all the singers. The influence of earlier poems, which were industriously copied and often recited, tended to preserve this spirit. Great historical events gave it new life.

The custom of celebrating such events in song was primeval, and lived on after the impulse of the English epic muse had ceased. The later chroniclers oftentimes made use of these songs, particularly Henry of Huntington, who wrote his *Historia Anglorum* in the twelfth century. It has been justly remarked that in such descriptions as Henry's is heard the true echo of early national poetry; as in his portrayal of the battle of Burford (752), so important for the future of the West-Saxons, and of the incomparable heroism of Ealdorman Aethelhun. Likewise the narrative in the Winchester *Annals*, of the violent death of King Cynewulf and the vengeance of his faithful followers, seems to be based upon an English song.

The chroniclers themselves began, in the course of the tenth century, to cultivate this kind of poetry; in consequence of this its character was not a little changed, the epic element receding before the lyrico-rhetorical, and the reporting spirit of the annalist.

In the *Annals* of Winchester, the piece of noble prose which comes down to the year 924 is followed by a section of an entirely different character. It covers the period from 925 to 978, the days of Aethelstan, Eadmund, Eadred, Eadwig, Eadgar, when the unity of the English nation was completed and fortified, and when the realm reached the summit of its power and glory. The annals belonging to this period are remarkably meagre and dry, and the short, broken, prose entries are enlivened only by four poems,

[1] The poet of the *Menologium*, which may be placed between 940 and 980 (see p. 92), has already used it.

which refresh the reader like oases. By far the most notable in length and poetic worth is the first (for the year 937), which describes the brilliant victory of King Aethelstan and his brother Eadmund at Brunanburh. They there fought the Scots under their King Constantine and the Northmen come from Ireland. The following is a translation of the entire poem:

This year King Aethelstan, the lord of eorls, the ring-giver of warriors, and eke his brother, Eadmund the Aetheling, won lifelong fame with the edges of swords in battle at Brunanburh. They clave the board-wall, hewed the war-lindens, with leavings of hammers, Eadweard's offspring, as was native to them from their fathers that they should defend their land, their hoard and their homes, oft in strife against every foe. The foes bent low, they of the Scottish folk, and ship-farers fell, doomed to death. The field was enriched with the warriors' blood, from the morning-tide when the sun, the splendid star, God's beaming candle, glided over the grounds, until the noble creature sank to his seat at eve. There lay many a fighter of the northern men by spears laid low, shot over the shield, also of the Scots, weary, sated with war. The West-Saxons followed the hated folk in rider bands, forth, the livelong day. With might they hewed the fugitives from behind with swords well-sharpened. The Mercians refused not the hard hand-play to any of the heroes, who, doomed to death in battle, had sought the land with Anlaf, in the ship's bosom, over the waves' blending. Five lay on that battle-stead, young kings put to sleep by the sword; eke seven of Anlaf's eorls, and a countless number from the host of the ship-men and the Scots. There was put to flight the prince of the Northmen, pressed by need to the ship's prow with a little band. The boat drove afloat, the king departed, saved his life, upon the fallow flood. Likewise the aged man came by flight to his home in the north, Constantine, the hoary battle-hero; he needed not to vaunt of the sword-mingling: he was deprived of his kinsmen, stripped of his friends on the battle-place, bereft in the struggle, and he had left his son upon the slaughter-field, mangled with wounds, young in war. The gray-haired man had no ground to boast of the sword-strife, the old deceiver, and Anlaf no more; with the leavings of their hosts, they might not laugh that they were better in the battle-work upon the battle-stead in the clash of banners, in the meeting of spears, the gathering of men, the interchange of weapons, which they played upon the battle-field with Eadweard's offspring. Then the Northmen went away in their nailed boats, leaving the bloody spears, upon the sea, over deep water, to seek Difelin,[1] and their land again, ashamed in mind. Likewise the brothers, both together, king and aetheling, sought their home, the land of the West-Saxons, exulting in war. They left behind them to share the corpses, the dark-coated fowl, the swart raven, horny beaked, and the ash-coloured eagle, white behind, to enjoy the carrion, the greedy war hawk, and that gray beast, the wolf in the wood. Never yet was more slaughter on this island, of folk felled before this, by the

[1] Dublin.

sword-edges, so far as the books tell us, old wise men, since Angles and Saxons came hither from the east, sought Britain over the broad sea, the proud war-smiths, overcame the Welsh, the eorls eager for glory, gained a country.

The poem does not seem to have been written by one who saw the battle. At least we learn from it no more in substance than might have been put down in a short entry of the *Chronicle*. The poem lacks the epic perception and direct power of the folk-song, as well as invention. The patriotic enthusiasm, however, upon which it is borne, the lyrical strain which pervades it, yield their true effect. The rich resources derived from the national epos are here happily utilised, and the pure versification and brilliant style of the whole stir our admiration.

A short poem (for 942) relates the final annexation by King Eadmund of the five "Danish boroughs"[1] in Mercia, and depicts the joy of the inhabitants at their liberation from the Danish yoke. More important in the matter of style are the account of the coronation of Eadgar at Bath in 973, and the poem on Eadgar's death in 975. These latter poems were apparently written for the place in which they stand. They are mere annalistic entries in poetical form.

In the same period may be placed the *Poetical Calendar*, known as the *Menologium*, which, in the following century, was prefixed to the Abingdon recension of the English *Annals*. There had been since Beda's time abundant models of martyrologies in Latin prose and verse. Neither did the poet of this *Calendar* lack predecessors in English. He certainly borrowed his best passages from earlier English poets; but, like them, he had a true feeling for the life of nature, which, occasionally breaking forth, animates his style in spite of the dryness of his subject.

Meanwhile historical poetry had not died out among the people, and genuine poesy still lived in the folk-song. A precious relic of such verse, a song inspired by the immediate impression of the event it celebrates, has been in great part spared by a kind fate. Its origin is due to one of the many battles with the Danes which shook England during the pernicious reign of the second Aethelred. A band of Normans under Justin and Guthmund made, in the year 991, an incur-

[1] Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham, Stamford, Derby.

sion into the eastern coast of England, and after plundering Ipswich, penetrated into Essex as far as Maldon on the Panta river. Near this town the river divides into two branches; the southerly arm washes the northern declivity of the hill upon which Maldon lies. The Danish ships seem to have taken their position in this branch, while the warriors occupied the space between the two arms of the river. Then the East-Saxon ealdorman, Byrhtnoth, advanced from the north with a hastily collected band, and halted on the northern arm of the Panta, on whose shores ensued the conflict celebrated in the song of *Byrhtnoth's Death*.[1]

Byrhtnoth brought his force into battle array, and riding about exhorted and encouraged his warriors. Then he dismounted from his horse, and took his place among his faithful thegns.

On the other shore stood a herald of the Vikings who, with a powerful voice and threatening tone, spoke the demand of the sea-rovers: "Active sea-men send me to thee; they bid me say to thee, that thou must quickly send rings for safety; and it is better for you that ye buy off this spear-rush with tribute, than that we share such hard fight. If thou who art the richest here, dost decide that thou wilt redeem thy people, wilt give the sea-men money at their own prizing, in exchange for peace, then we will enter our ships with the treasures, go afloat, and keep peace with you." Byrhtnoth held fast his shield, swung his slender ash aloft, and answered with scorn and decision: "Hearest thou, seafarer, what this folk saith? They will give you spears for tribute, the poisonous lance-point, and the old sword, war-trappings that are not good for you in battle. Messenger of the water-men, announce again, say to thy people warlike words: A noble eorl stands here with his band, who will protect this inheritance, Aethelred's, my prince's country, folk, and lands. Heathen shall fall in the battle. To me it seems too shameful that ye should go to your ships with your treasures, unfought, now that ye have come hither thus far into our land. Ye shall not gain treasure so easily; rather shall the point and the edge become us, grim battle-play, before we give tribute." He drew up his warriors upon the bank. The high tide that swelled the Panta stream prevented the forces from getting

[1] *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*, I, 343–352.

to each other. On its shores stood opposed the East-Saxons and the "host of the ashen ships." Neither could injure the other; only by arrows were some struck down. The ebb came; the rovers stood ready, eager for battle. Then the protector of heroes commanded a hardened veteran, Wulfstan, son of Keola, to guard the bridge. Near him stood the two fearless warriors, Aelfhere and Maccus. They defended themselves with vigour against the enemy, as long as they could wield their weapons. Then the evil guests asked that passage over the ford be granted them. In his haughtiness the eorl gave them the shore free. The son of Byrhthelm (Byrhtnoth) called out over the cold waters (the warriors lay in wait): "Now that space is cleared for you, come to us at once, men, to the battle! God alone knows who shall rule the slaughter-place." Then the war-wolves, the hosts of the Vikings, without shunning the water, waded westward across the Panta. Byrhtnoth stood there with his heroes in readiness; he ordered them to form the battle-hedge with their shields, and to maintain their ranks fast against the enemy. Then the time was come when those consecrated to death should fall; a cry was raised; ravens circled in the air, and eagles, craving for carrion; on the earth clamour prevailed. Spears flew from the hands; the bow was busy; the shield received the point; bitter was the rage of battle; warriors fell. On both sides lay the young fighters. Wulfmær, Byrhtnoth's kinsman, sank, struck down by swords. Eadweard avenged him, as with his sword he laid one of the Vikings low at his feet. The warriors stood fast. Byrhtnoth urged them on. Wounded by the spear of a sea-man, the eorl struck the shaft with his shield; it broke and sprang back. He fiercely thrust his own spear through his enemy's neck to his heart, so that his corselet burst. The hero rejoiced. He laughed and thanked God for the day's work which had been vouchsafed him. Then from the hand of another enemy there flew a spear which pierced him through. Wulfmær the youth, Wulfstan's son, who fought at his side, drew the bloody dart from the hero's body, and sent it back; the point penetrated, and stretched him upon the earth who had hit Wulfmær's master. Then a mailed man stepped up to the eorl to rob him of his weapons. Byrhtnoth drew his broad brown sword from its sheath, and smote

him upon the corselet. But one of the ship-men crippled the hero's hand with a blow. The fallow-hilted sword fell to the ground; he could no longer hold it. But the gray battle-hero still cheered on the youths; his feet refused to serve him; he looked toward heaven and said: "I thank Thee, Ruler of Peoples, for all the joys that I have had in the world Now, mild Creator, I have most need that Thou grant my spirit good, that my soul may go to Thee, may pass with peace into Thy power, King of Angels." Then the heathen struck him down, and the two heroes who fought near him, Aelfnoth and Wulfmær, gave up their spirits at their lord's side.

Cowards now turned to flight. First the sons of Adda: Godric forsook the noble one who had given him many a horse, and fled upon his lord's own steed; and with him his brothers, Godwine and Godwig, and more of the warriors than was at all becoming. Aethelred's eorl, the people's prince, had fallen; all of his kindred saw that their lord lay slain. The proud warriors rushed up, willed either to avenge the dear one or to yield their lives. Aelfric's son, the young warrior Aelfwine, exhorted them. He said: "Think of the speeches which we often spoke at mead, when we raised up vaunting upon the bench, heroes in the hall, about hard battle. Now may be shown who is bold. I will show forth my lineage to all, that I was of high race in Mercia. My old father was called Ealhhelm, a wise ealdorman, worldly prosperous. Never shall the thegns reproach me among the people, that I would desert this host, and seek my country, now that my prince lies slain in battle. That is my greatest grief: he was both my kinsman and my lord." Then he strode forward, thinking of blood-vengeance. To the same effect spoke Offa and Leofsunu. Dunhere, too, an aged ceorl, took up the word. Swinging his lance, he bade all heroes avenge Byrhtnoth: "Never may he hesitate who thinketh to avenge his lord in the people, nor care for his life." They went forward, careless of life. The kinsmen began a hard fight; they prayed God it might be granted them to avenge their kin and chief, and to work slaughter among their enemies. Aescferth the Northumbrian, Ecglaf's son, helped them zealously; ceaseless flew his arrows and pierced the foe. Eadweard the Long swore he would not leave the field

where his prince lay, a foot's breadth. He broke through the shield-wall, and, before he lay with the corpses, fought until he had worthily avenged the treasure-giver, among the sea-warriors. So also did Aetheric and many another. Offa slew the sea-farer, Gadde's kinsman. But he himself was soon struck down. He had kept the vow he made to his lord: that they would ride safe homeward together, or fall in the fight, die of their wounds upon the slaughter-field. And like a true thegn, he lay near his lord. There fought Wihstan, Thurstan's son, and the two brothers, Oswold and Eadwold, urged on the heroes. But Byrhtwold, the aged comrade, spoke as he grasped fast his shield and shook his ash: "The spirit should be all the harder, the heart all the bolder, the courage should be the greater, the more our forces lessen; here lieth our prince cut down, the brave one, slain in the dust. May he ever mourn who thinketh to turn now from this battle-play. I am old in days; I will not go away, but I think to lie by my lord's side; I will lie by such a beloved warrior." Godric, Aethelgar's son, also exhorted all to the struggle. He often sent his spear against the Vikings, struck and flung them down, until he sank in the fight. That was not the Godric who fled from the battle. . . .

At this point the fragment breaks off.

This song of *Byrhtnoth's Death* is one of the pearls of Old English poetry, full, as it is, of dramatic life, and of the fidelity of an eye-witness. Its deep feeling throbs in the clear and powerful portrayal. In sharp contrast to the *Song of Brunanburh*, the lyrical element is still less prominent than in *Beowulf*. The style is simple, pithy, noble; compared with the epic, it is concise and even dry. This is partly due to the difference between two classes of poetry, and partly to the disparity in time. But the basis of the national mind is the same, and the fundamental character of the national art remains unchanged. The ideas of the *comitatus* and its heroic spirit retain their full strength and influence; and poetry still possesses all the necessary resources for their expression.

There appear tokens of metrical decline, of the dissolution of ancient art-forms. The law of alliteration is often violated, both as regards the position of the chief alliterative word and the emphasis of the alliterative syllables. The re-

lation between sentence and verse has become more harmonious; both often close at the same place. Thus the unity of the verse strikes the ear more smoothly. But at the same time is opened a path leading to the complete destruction of this unity. Since the cæsura retains its old force, its power is emphasised by the narrow limits of the now isolated verse. Growing looseness in alliteration, frequent use of the leonine rhyme (which rarely appears in *Byrhtnoth*), will inevitably convert that unity into duality.

That the popular poetry went on in this direction, we see in the many historical poems which were inserted in later copies of the English annals; their authors, probably monks, were doubtless influenced by the folk-song. Good examples are the poem, in two manuscripts[1] (year 975), on Eadgar's death, and especially the song on the Aetheling Aelfred, the son of King Aethelred (year 1036). The latter, owing to the complete dissolution of alliterative forms and the frequent use of rhyme, reads like a product of the transition period, and almost like a poem in short couplets.

An alternation of long and short lines, as well as utterly lawless alliteration, appear in other poems, as that on the death in 979[2] of Eadweard the Martyr. There is often a disposition to restrict the alliteration to the short line. Here and there we find passages clothed in rhythmical prose, sometimes alliterative, and sometimes rhymed.[3]

On the other hand the writer of the song on the death of Eadweard the Confessor wields the ancient forms with some ease and grace.

IX.

King Aelfred was, in truth, the first to give to his people a national prose literature, and directly after him, in the chronicler of his last deeds and of the successes of his son Eadweard, arose an unusually talented prose writer, but one who, unfortunately, does not seem to have ventured upon any work of great scope. With Eadweard's death came a break of some length, when production did not entirely cease,

[1] Cotton Tib. IV. and Laud 636. See Thorpe, p. 228; Earle, p. 125.
[2] Earle, p. 129.
[3] For an instance, see the entry for 959 found in several manuscripts, Thorpe, p. 217; Earle, p. 119.

but yielded no works which could, at the same time, furnish models of writing and educate the people in the spirit of Aelfred.

To judge from the texts transmitted, there began, in this period, a medical literature in English, though its first monument presupposes a certain learned tradition in the English medical circles. The *Læce Bôc* (Leech Book) is a comprehensive collection of medical prescriptions and recipes for the most diverse diseases, the causes of which are also touched upon. It consists of two books; but in the manuscript that preserves it to us, a third of similar contents has been added, and it probably belongs to the same period.[1]

The originals from which the compiler of the *Læce Bôc* directly or indirectly drew are many and various; Greek and Roman writers played an important part, though the former were most probably accessible to the English physicians only in Latin translations. Beside these, the authority of physicians with such names as Oxa or Dun is occasionally set forth, and these we may, with little doubt, regard as Englishmen. Scandinavian influence is unmistakable in some passages. The entry subjoined to a number of recipes (II. C. 44) is very interesting. "Dominus Helias, Patriarch of Jerusalem, caused all this to be communicated to King Aelfred."[2] The prominent part played in the *Læce Bôc* by superstition may be explained by the ancient relation between it and medicine. Many diseases are traced to magic, to the influence of malevolent beings endowed with higher powers, and oftentimes very strange remedies are prescribed for their removal, as especially spells and incantations. Among them is one in the Gaelic language. Later medical books did not adopt a different method. In a collection of prescriptions transmitted in the Harl. MS. 585., such formulas in English or Latin, and partly even in Greek and Hebrew, fill a disproportionately large space. Among the English formulas in this manuscript are several charms in verse dating back to an earlier period.

Besides the larger collections, many recipes and formulas of incantation have reached us written upon loose sheets. There

[1] At the close of the second book are some Latin verses, the first of which runs: *Bald habet hunc librum Cild quem conscribere jussit.* *Saxon Leechdoms*, Ed. O. Cockayne, II. 298.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 290.

are also short medical essays, treatises on various topics of superstition; as, the influence of the moon's phases or the days of the week upon the fate of a man born under their sway, the interpretation of dreams, etc.

Particular mention may also be made of the English *Herbarium*, which was probably composed in the first half of the eleventh century, and whose first part is founded upon Apulejus, and the second upon Dioskorides, though not upon the original text. As here the medicinal uses of single plants are analysed, those of quadrupeds are treated in the writing, *Medicina de quadrupedibus*, connected with the name of Sextus Placitus. This also underwent an English rendering at about the same time.

Of religious prose, the tenth century seems to have yielded more than one English work of doubtful theology; though this was without question more due to meagre learning than to any heterodox tendency in the clergy. Aelfric, who began to write in the last decade of the century, says in the preface to his homilies: "I saw and heard numerous errors in many English books, which unlearned men, in their simplicity, counted much wisdom."[1] In another place he asks: "How can any read the false representations, which they call the Vision of Paul? since he himself says that he heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for man to utter."[2] The loss of such writings is certainly more to be regretted by the historian of literature than the loss of many an orthodox homily.

Nevertheless books were not quite lacking which the orthodoxy of that day deemed neither apochryphal nor dangerous. We may conclude from a remark of Aelfric that there existed in English, at his time, an exhaustive account of the sufferings of the apostles Peter and Paul. It is true that this cannot have been composed long before his own first writings appeared, but, on the other hand, he may have remained unacquainted with some of the works extant before him. Perhaps among them was the prose version of the life of St. Guthlac by Felix of Croyland.

Several interlinear versions appeared in the tenth century, especially in Northumbria. But a nearer consideration of

[1] *Homilies of Aelfric*, Ed. Thorpe, I. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 332.

them belongs to the history of language, not to that of literature. Suffice it to note that the splendid Gospel Manuscript, wrought in Lindisfarne, to St. Cuthberht's honour, and afterwards brought to Durham upon the removal of the bishopric, was supplied with an interlinear version in this period, and so were the rituals of Durham, as well as the so-called *Rushworth Gospels*.

A high development of ecclesiastical literature presupposed, above all, a reformation of the clergy. With all his good intentions, Aelfred had not been able adequately to carry out such a reformation; indeed, the achievement of this reform, as it was brought about later, would justly have caused grave scruples in the great king, who was as good a statesman as he was a warm friend of the Church, and whose humanity was as strong as his piety. But the enormous advance of national culture in his reign was almost entirely his work, and had therefore a popular, secular character. His own knowledge did not suffice to elevate the clergy and scholarship in his kingdom to their former level, nor did that of his co-labourers; and what was accomplished in this direction soon went to ruin under his successors. A necessary consequence of this was, that even Aelfred's more popular efforts were continued with no great vigour after his death. Ever will those men form an exception in whom, as in Aelfred, the passion for knowledge and the love of humanity can make up for defective learning.

The picture of the clergy in the writings of its reformers, is doubtless darker than the reality. They were, however, as ignorant as when Aelfred began to reign, and, doubtless, still more secularised. It might not, perhaps, have greatly shocked a parish of that day, if its pastor had a wife and children; but there were also cases of divorce and bigamy among the English clergy. Even then, many livings were apparently sinecures, whose incumbents were wont to gratify their favourite passions, without troubling themselves about their flocks. Horses, dogs, in short, the pleasures of the chase were as highly esteemed by them as by the country gentleman whose type Fielding has drawn for us. And they loved, not less than that rural squire, a good draught and the entertainment of a merry repast. Some of them even became noted as drinking-poets. All in all, we may assume

that the clergy did not stand much higher in intellectual culture than the laity, and consequently, that they were a grade lower in morals.

The cloister life upon which depended the progress of learning in the earlier Middle Ages languished, was, indeed, as good as extinct. Nearly all English monasteries were empty, or lay in ruins. The monks still left were scarcely conspicuous for monastic discipline.

That a reaction of strict asceticism should follow such a state of things, was unavoidable. Movements in that direction began to be felt in England at nearly the same time as on the continent, where the cloister of Cluny became their centre, and they did not develop without some influence from France.[1] Their soul, however, was the great primate Dunstan, one of those sharply-defined figures wont to appear at the turning-points of church history.

Dunstan was a passionate, energetic man, whose ecclesiastical zeal smothered many a gentler emotion. He had a clear head, but an end was often plainer to him than the means of reaching it. After a severe, even ascetic training,[2] he came to the Aethelstan's court. His youth was varied by an amour and an illness. Then came the conversion, the hermit life, and the study after the manner of Demosthenes, to which Dunstan joined exercise in every kind of craft. Under King Eadmund (940–946), he began to win public notice, and to realise his maturing ideas. The king entrusted to him the care of his new foundation of Glastonbury. This monastery became, under Dunstan, the starting-point for the revival of English monachism, to which also the succeeding ruler, Eadred, (946–955) proved favourable. What Dunstan wished was twofold: to bring back monastic life upon the basis of the rule of St. Benedict to its original purity and strict discipline, and to permeate the entire English church with the spirit of monasticism. A strong party soon gathered around the reformer; but opponents also banded together. The latter found a powerful support in Eadmund's elder son King Eadwig (955–958). Dunstan was banished. But upon the accession of Eadgar (958–975), the reform party

[1] The sending of Osgar to Fleury and Abbo of Fleury's journey to England may be mentioned in this connection.

[2] According to the English *Annals*, Dunstan was born in the year 925, a date which, from internal evidence, may be considered as set too late.

was victorious. One of the first acts of the new ruler was to recall Dunstan, for whom he had long felt a warm admiration. He made him, in quick succession, bishop of Worcester, of London, and finally, archbishop of Canterbury. As primate of England and adviser of the king, he possessed an influence approaching that of Richelieu, and by means of it he could proceed to a full realisation of his plans. The secular clergy were deprived of their pleasures, and marriage was forbidden among them. On the other hand, the duty of preaching, of explaining to their flocks the dominical and ferial pericopes was enjoined upon them. Restored or newly-founded convents sprang up everywhere, which were most richly endowed by the piety of the king and many of his thegns. The secular clergy, with the exception of those who themselves took to religious life, were expelled from a large number of the chief churches of England and replaced by monks. In short, it was by a violent revolution that Dunstan accomplished his ideas of reform.

In these conflicts and labours, Dunstan found powerful supporters in such men as Bishop Oswald of Worcester; and above all, in Aethelwold, who worked for the same end as he, but with greater discretion, and who was chiefly active in procuring the means that could promote the central idea of those aims, and thus create lasting results.

Aethelwold had passed his youth with Dunstan at King Aethelstan's court, he was consecrated a priest on the same day with him, and followed him to Glastonbury. Here in the Benedictine garb, he continued his studies, which he had ever zealously pursued, and became one of the best scholars of his time. Made abbot of Abingdon by King Eadred, he worked tirelessly to advance the greatness of his monastery. He increased the number of monks more than fourfold (he had brought some of them with him from Glastonbury); he had one of his loyal followers, Osgar, fetch from Fleury a copy of the rules of St. Benedict, together with oral directions for their practice. He was able to restore former possessions to his abbey, and to procure further valuable donations from King Eadgar. With the king's support, even as he says, at his command, he built a splendid minster at Abingdon, and from his own means bestowed rich ornaments and costly utensils upon it. He became bishop of Winchester in the

year 963, and from that time on he was Dunstan's right hand. The "priests" of the new minster in the episcopal city had very soon to give way before the "monks" of Abingdon. The convent of Ely was restored by Aethelwold's zeal, and largely endowed. A new one was founded at Peterborough, where nothing is said to have remained of the former edifice save ancient masonry in the forest; and another cloister soon after arose in its vicinity, at Thorney. The rule of St. Benedict and the discipline of Glastonbury and Abingdon were everywhere introduced.

But what makes Aethelwold's memory truly venerable, was his care for the education of the clergy, and thence of the people. The school of the Old Minster at Winchester under him became the source of higher education for a large part of England, and there he himself took active part in instruction and admonition. With his high station, his eloquence, and his knowledge, his zeal must indeed have inflamed that of his pupils. But above all, he communicated to them his own love for the mother-tongue, which, with the Latin, was zealously studied in the writings of Aelfred.

Aethelwold himself became an author, though in a limited field. His English, but by no means literal, version of the *Regula Sancti Benedicti* is famous, though the main portion of it has not yet been published; he composed this work at the request of King Eadgar, for the benefit of those entering the monastic life without scholarship. He subjoined to this translation an appendix[1] on the history of the English church, in which, with exalted language, he celebrated the services of King Eadgar in the cause to which he himself had consecrated his life.

Aethelwold outlived Eadgar and his unhappy son Eadmund the Martyr (975–979), and died in the year 984, four years before Dunstan. He did not live to see the time when the seeds of a national literature which he had strewn should bear rich fruit. But phenomena appeared as early as during Eadgar's reign which at least foreshadowed that time.

The English homilies, preserved in part fragmentarily in the Blickling manuscript, were composed in the year 971. Although they probably did not issue directly from Aethelwold's school in Winchester, yet they were beyond question

[1] *Saxon Leechdoms* III., 432 *et seq.*

a product of the tendency of thought created by Dunstan, Aethelwold, and their adherents.

The homilist speaks often in the tone of an exhorter to repentance, announcing the near approach of the end of all things. "No man on earth is so holy and none in heaven," he says in the homily on Ascension-day, "as to know when our Lord will put an end to the world on the judgment-day, save only the Lord alone. Yet we know that the time is not distant, since the signs and tokens which our Lord foretold would happen before the last day, have all been fulfilled, with the single exception that the accursed stranger, the Antichrist, has not yet come to the earth. Yet it will not now be long before that shall also happen; for this earth must necessarily end in the time which is now present, since five ages have already passed. In this age of the world, then, shall this earth come to an end, and the greater part of it has already elapsed: exactly nine hundred and seventy-one years this year."[1] The preacher, it is true, takes occasion to add that the ages have not all been of equal length, and no man can know how long God will make the present millennium; but this doubtless did not prevent his hearers from looking forward with terror to the end of the century. The homilist delights in descriptions of the last judgment and of the signs preceding it, of hell and its torments—things of which he has a very complete conception. Seriously and impressively, he exhorts to repentance, and urges even priests and bishops to a pure and pious life. His learning in theology is not great, and is somewhat confused, however well-informed he is in the legends of the saints. He frequently draws from apocryphal sources: from the *Visio Pauli* and the *Evangelium Nicodemi*. He sometimes makes one and the same person speak words put in the mouths of different personages in the Bible, and adds matter contained only in the expositions of commentators and homilists. He seems more concerned in effectively shaping his scenes than for painstaking, historical accuracy or literal fidelity to the Bible.

His language has many elements of antiquity, and is not even free from clumsy pleonasms, like the use of the article after the possessive pronoun, or of the substantive after the personal pronoun which should replace it; the latter license

[1] *Blickling Homilies*, Ed. R. Morris, p. 117–18.

occurs more frequently in some of the homilies, as in I. and XI. Yet the style is, on the whole, animated, is pervaded by a certain heartiness of tone, and is sometimes impressive.

About twenty years after the appearance of these homilies, Aelfric began to write; he himself certainly being the chief among the works of Aethelwold.

Born towards the end of Eadgar's reign, he grew up, from the beginning, in that atmosphere which Dunstan and Aethelwold first had to create about themselves. He was of a gentle and loving, yet decided, nature, and was educated in the monastery school of Aethelwold, whom he ever held in pious remembrance, and into whose ideas he completely entered. Though lacking special energy of creative power, he possessed, in a high degree, the gift of mental assimilation of facts and ideas, and of moulding them into lucid coherence; he also had great facility of expression. At once cautious and bold, with a sure judgment on the practical need of the moment, a nice tact in the management of persons and affairs, this cultured priest, this monk of spotless life, this learned divine, won many friends among both clergy and laity. The Ealdorman Aethelweard, the son-in-law of the heroic Byrhtnoth, was especially noteworthy among the latter; in him was united literary culture, wide for a layman, with a great fondness for monks, a quality also characteristic of his famous father-in-law. Aethelweard's son Aethelmær seems to have stood even nearer to our Aelfric than his father.

Aelfric was more than once employed in various ecclesiastical affairs, and especially, as his peculiar talent became known, was he often called upon to compose writings, as the needs of clergymen or laymen urgently required them. It was only to respond to these needs, and not from any strong creative impulse or lust of fame that Aelfric wrote, while he gloriously continued the work of the great Aelfred, upon whose style he had formed himself.

His first work was apparently a double cycle of homilies numbering eighty in all,[1] and covering the entire ecclesiastical year. He dedicated this collection, known by the title of *Homiliae Catholicae*, to the Archbishop Sigeric, who oc-

[1] Aelfric added several other homilies in a new edition of the second part of this collection.

cupied the throne of Canterbury from 990 to 994. Compared with the *Blickling Homilies*, Aelfric's sermons were conspicuous for deep and genuine theological learning, of which he made moderate use, adjusting it to the position of his hearers. The church fathers served as his models and sources, above all Gregory and Beda; but he ever retained a certain originality, and in the abridgment as well as the expansion of his original, he discloses a temperate and intelligent mind. The following passage on the birth of the Holy Virgin is characteristic for this mental tendency, which, with the strictest devoutness shunned many of the extravagances to which religious minds easily incline:

> What shall we say in regard to the time of Mary's birth, save that she was begotten by her father and mother like other people, and was born on the day that we call *sexta idus Septembris?* Her father was called Joachim and her mother Anna, pious people according to the ancient law; but we will write no more of them, lest we fall into some error. The Gospel itself for this day is very hard for laymen to understand; it is, for the most part, filled out with the names of holy men, and these require a very long explanation of their spiritual meaning. Hence we leave it unsaid.[1]

Like his originals, and also like his predecessor, the Blickling homilist, Aelfric gave preference to the allegorical interpretation of the biblical text, yet usually with that caution which we have praised in him.

Aelfric's style is conspicuous for clearness and graceful finish. His language has a more modern garb as to form and phrase than the Aelfredian, and adapts itself more easily to the sequence of thought. The tone of his sermons is more intelligent and temperate than that of the *Blickling Homilies;* nevertheless it betrays warmth of feeling and a high conception of the preacher's calling, and occasionally rises to stirring enthusiasm. Aelfric, too, was convinced that the last day was imminent, and it was this conviction that decided him to write his book, so that men, strengthened by "book-learning," might resist the temptation awaiting them by the Antichrist.[2]

Aelfric had wished, in his English homilies, to supply a need, not to pander to indolence; and to make the acquisition of Latin easy to beginners, he next wrote a Latin grammar

[1] *Homilies of Aelfric*, Ed. Thorpe, II. 466.
[2] *Ibid.*, I. 2, 4.

in English, an extract from Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae*. A Latin-English glossary, topically classified, was meant to promote the same object; as also the so-called *Colloquium Aelfrici*, a Latin discourse between teacher and pupil, intended to impress upon the latter some of the more difficult words indispensable in conversation. To the *Colloquium* is added an English interlinear version—at least in one of the two manuscripts[1] that have come to us.

A short physico-astronomical treatise in English may be placed in the same period as these grammatical writings. Its title is sometimes *De temporibus*, sometimes *De computo*, and also *De primo die saeculi*, and it treats the division of the year, the stars, and some meteorological phenomena; it is compiled on the basis of various writings of Beda: *De temporium ratione, De temporibus, De natura rerum.*

About the year 996, Aelfric gave to the English church, particularly to the monasteries, a new collection of homilies, in his *Passions* (or rather Lives) *of the Saints*, *Passiones sanctorum*,[2] of which but a few have yet been published. He here makes almost constant use of a kind of metre he had already frequently employed in the older collection. One can hardly say that he writes in verse. The freedom with which the law of alliteration is handled, and the simple diction, that does not rise above the level of prose, makes the designation rhythmical, alliterative prose most suitable for this form. The qualities of style in Aelfric's alliterative homilies are of the same sort as those of his simple prose homilies.

It was chiefly Ealdorman Aethelweard and his son Aethelmær who had incited the composition of the *Passiones sanctorum*. We also owe to the former, Aelfric's version of several books of the Old Testament, which appeared about 997.

We find already in the *Lives of the Saints* two homilies, epitomising the Old Testament books of Kings and Maccabees and both in alliterative form. Perhaps, at about the same time, Aelfric rendered, likewise in alliteration, the books of Judges and Esther. The free, though not alliterative version of the book of Job was possibly produced somewhat

[1] In the Cotton MS. (Tib. A. 3.), not in the Oxford MS., which presents the *Colloquium* as extended by the later Aelfric (Aelfric Bata.).

[2] Some of these had doubtless already appeared as independent writings; as the very exhaustive *Life of St. Martin* after Sulpicius Severus and the *Passion of St. Eadmund* after Abbo of Fleury. There are also homilies of different subject-matter among the *Lives of the Saints.*

earlier; it much resembles the homily on Job in the second cycle of the *Homiliae catholicae.*

Aelfric was now called upon by Aethelweard to translate Genesis. But he hesitated to execute this wish; many features in the lives of the old patriarchs, as their polygamy, seemed little fitted to serve as examples to English Christians. But when Aethelweard told him he already had a translation of Genesis from Isaac to the close, and that Aelfric need translate only the beginning of the book, he reluctantly undertook the task. Availing himself of the earlier fragmentary version, and leaving untouched certain peculiarities of its language, he rendered Genesis into good, vigorous, flowing English, not without some slight omissions, but in the main, with fidelity. The remaining books of the Pentateuch seem already to have been at least partially translated. And in rendering extracts from these, Aelfric again made use of the work of his predecessors. He left the impress of his own style most clearly in the version of the fourth Mosaic book; here he is as independent as in the first half of Genesis. The alliteration, which he elsewhere employs for single passages, becomes dominant in this fourth book. Aelfric soon after added an abridgment of the book of Joshua, likewise in alliterative form. This version of the book of Judges was evidently later appended by another hand to the whole.

Aelfric's fame had meanwhile been steadily growing. Bishop Wulfsige of Sherborne now commissioned him to compose a pastoral letter to the priests of his diocese, who, it seems, still resisted celibacy, and needed a new inculcation of the dogmas and precepts adopted for the priestly order at the Council of Nice. Aelfric probably performed his task to the satisfaction of the bishop, certainly in a thorough and worthy manner, and produced a work in two parts, known by the title *Canones Aelfrici.* It first treats of priesthood and the way priests should live, and next offers special liturgical directions, and the like. As may be imagined, the chapter on celibacy plays a leading part. The short Latin letter to Bishop Wulfsige, with which Aelfric accompanied his pastoral, is interesting and characteristic of the author.

Brother Aelfric in humility to the reverend Bishop Wulfsinus, greeting in the Lord. We have gladly obeyed thy command, but we did not venture to write of the order of bishops; for it is your affair to know how ye should be an example in right living for all, and should

exhort your subordinates by continued admonition to the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. I say, nevertheless, that ye should speak more frequently to your clergy and reprove their neglect; for the canonical directions and the holy church doctrine are nearly destroyed by their perversity. Free then thy spirit, and tell them what commandments the priests and servants of Christ have to keep, lest thou thyself go astray in like manner, if thou art as a mute dog. But we write this letter which follows, in English, as if it were set down from thy lips, and thou hadst thus spoken to the clergy under thee.

In the year 1005, the learned and deserving priest was installed as abbot of the convent of Eynsham in Oxfordshire. The monastery was most richly endowed by Aethelmær, who had peopled it with Benedictines so that it was regarded as a creation of that noble man. Aethelmær himself spent a large part of his later life in Eynsham, and through him Aelfric probably made the acquaintance of a number of men of note in the vicinity. These induced him to undertake new works, and were able, on their part, to bring powerful influence to bear in the realisation of his ideas. Among them were Wulfgeat of Ylmandune (Ilmingdon on the boundary between the counties of Warwick and Gloucester), Sigwerd of Easthealon in Oxfordshire, and Sigeferth.[1]

To Wulfgeat he addressed a long epistle, chiefly treating, besides some points of dogma, the duty of forgiveness. He wrote a letter to Sigeferth "on the chastity which ordained men should maintain": the idea that lay very close to his heart, and which he defended, when he could, though his views were less rigid than those of Dunstan and Aethelwold, and did not bluntly disdain every concession or compromise. Finally he directed his tract *De veteri et de novo testamento* to Sigwerd. This is a popular introduction to both Testaments, showing traces of Augustine's, and particularly of Isidore's influence, and mainly intended to instruct the laity, who are exhorted to read those parts of the Holy Scriptures that had been translated into English.

Aelfric, at the beginning of his work as abbot, had early made an extract from Aethelwold's version of the Benedictine rule, for the monks of Eynsham. Not long after, he wrought a beautiful monument to his beloved teacher, whose work he continued; this was the Latin sketch *Vita Ethelwoldi*, dedicated to Bishop Kenulf of Winchester. His

[1] Wulfgeat, Sigwerd, and probably Sigeferth, were, like Aethelmær, royal thegns.

ceaseless activity yielded several other writings: a tract on the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost, a translation of the rule of St. Basil, several homilies, and above all, a new pastoral letter, which he wrote about the year 1014, at the command of Archbishop Wulfstan of York. This letter is called *Sermo ad Sacerdotes*, and strikes one like a second, revised and enlarged edition of that written for Wulfsige.[1] It contains the same directions and the same ideas, but somewhat amplified, otherwise arranged, and more elaborately supported.

So far as we can follow the busy career of Aelfric, he was always the same in his aims, his ideas, and the manner of bringing them into practice. His knowledge might increase, his arguments might gain depth and stringency, but the essence of his nature, as of his writings, remained the same. He appears to us from the beginning a finished, completely developed personality. Even his style is as lucid, fluent, and upon occasion as forcible, in the first collection of homilies as in his latest writings, although his command of language and of alliteration increased as time went on. In regard to his art, it was perhaps unfortunate that Aelfric yielded so early to the allurement of alliteration, which never lost its hold upon him. The writings of the second period, almost without exception, even including the rule of St. Basil and the introduction to the Old and New Testaments, appear with this adornment. The prose expression certainly did not gain precision by this.

The year of Aelfric's death is unknown. His entire life is contained in his works, and the former was early forgotten in view of the latter, from which proceeded a most far-reaching influence.

The English clergy was incited and enabled by Aelfric to elevate the religious culture of the people. Through his efforts there began anew to develop a certain intellectual and literary activity in the English church, an activity fostered mostly by the Benedictines. The period of literary production opened by Aelfric was, it is true, more practical and popular than scholarly in character. It brought to light chiefly homilies, lives of the saints, translations, adaptations

[1] This second pastoral letter is also in two parts, and is called *duae epistolae* by Aelfric himself. First written in Latin, it was turned into English at Wulfstan's command.

of books on church chronology, of *benedictionalia*, and of service-books. But their effect upon the people and their language was all the more direct on this account. The mere existence of this literature is a proof that the English clergy at the time of the Conquest were neither so ignorant nor so idle as their opponents liked to represent them.

Still in Aelfric's lifetime, we meet another notable preacher, who was probably moved by the great abbot to literary production. This is the Wulfstan (Lupus) already mentioned, who was archbishop of York from 1002 to 1023, and was at the same time bishop of Worcester up to 1016. We have, besides an epistle to the people of his church-province, a number of homilies from Wulfstan's pen, amounting, so far as counted, to fifty-three. Only one of them has, as yet, been published.[1] It dates from the year 1012, a time when the sufferings of the English people under the scourge of the Danish invasion had reached their summit. The homilist, with deep feeling, laments the irreligion and immoral lives of the people, as the cause of their sorrows, and proclaims the greater punishment that impends, the coming of Antichrist, the end of the world. All this is presented with less literary finish and less art than by Aelfric; yet with its plain popular tone, it is rich in life and colour.

Aelfric had rendered in the English language a part of the Old Testament, and, in his homilies, had given at least the pericopes from the New, and it was not long before a complete translation of the Gospels appeared. Translators also directed their industry to writings of more questionable value, as the so-called *Evangelium Nicodemi*, which was probably turned into English in the first half of the eleventh century.

A knowledge of the Latin language had been unquestionably advanced and extended by the efforts of Aethelwold and Aelfric. Toward the close of the tenth century, attempts in Latin became more frequent. A more exact knowledge of classical literature, and with it a better Latin style, were, it is true, not attained until the period after the Conquest, and with the energetic coöperation of the Normans. What Aethelwold and Aelfric themselves produced,

[1] *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos quando Dani maxime persecuti sunt eos.* This sermon was delivered four years before Aethelred's death.

and what they inspired in others was not, however, without moment for the renaissance movement of the twelfth century. We may mention, for example, the later Aelfric with the surname Bata, who made additions to the *Colloquium* of his teacher, and the monk and cantor of Winchester, Wulstan, a pupil of Aethelwold, who wrote a book *De tonorum harmonia*, put the *Miracula sancti Swithuni*, by Lantferth of the same school, into hexameters, sang in distichs[1] the rebuilding of his church, and remodelled the *Vita Ethelwoldi*, which thus gained little save a few flowers of speech.

The intrusion of Latin is also noticeable in the national chronicles. The chronicle of Fabius Quaestor Ethelwerdus, whose identity with Aelfric's patron, Ealdorman Aethelweard, seems to be well established, was the first of a series of attempts to relate more broadly in Latin, English history, which Beda had treated with special reference to ecclesiastical affairs, and Asser, in the biographical sense. Drawn in the main from the Winchester *Annals*, and having little originality, Aethelweard's chronicle follows the threads of the narrative down to Eadgar's death, the point where we dropped our consideration of the writing of English annals in the vernacular.

The chief seat of this annal-writing had hitherto been at Winchester. But the historiographic ascendency of this city was now past. Aethelwold and his successors seem to have taken little interest in the continuation of this national work. A brief entry for the year 1001 and a few meagre annals to fill out foregoing space was the last matter added in Winchester to the earlier records. The Parker manuscript seems to have passed to Canterbury not long afterward. Other ecclesiastical centres became prominent: Canterbury, Worcester, Abingdon. Work in Canterbury was at first confined to the multiplication of the Winchester *Annals*. During the first half of the eleventh century, two editions of them were there copied, one of which extends to 997, the other to 1001; but at the same time arose a truly productive activity in Worcester. As early as the time of Aelfred the Great, Northumbrian and Mercian annals had been here collected (perhaps by Werferth's influence), and historical records had, as

[1] Wulstan inserted this poem into the introduction to the *Miracula*, and likewise in the *Vita Ethelwoldi*.

it appears, been carried through the tenth century, though with breaks of considerable length. About the year 1016, a great compilation was instituted, in which the Winchester *Annals* were augmented by local matter, and continued to the death of the second Aethelred. The reign of the great Cnut (1016–1035) gave to England a long-wanting repose, but it was little favourable to the national historiography. Yet the rule of the Danish king upon the island in no respect involved a suppression of the English element, which, on the contrary, continued to assimilate the blood-related Norse element. The official language was also under Cnut the West-Saxon. In this dialect he promulgated his laws, which adjusted themselves in the main to those already long in force, and did not annul West-Saxon, Mercian, or Danish law. As the most cultivated of the lands united under Cnut's sceptre, England became conspicuous in the north, and drew advantages from her widened connections which proved fruitful for the future of her commerce. But the reign of Cnut was nevertheless a period of alien rule, of humiliation, which those must have felt most deeply upon whose spirit chronicle or poetry had most vividly impressed the picture of the glorious times of an Eadweard, Aethelstan, Eadmund, or Eadgar. The national feeling of the English was roused to a higher pitch under Eadweard the Confessor (1042–1065), the last scion of the ancient race of native princes. The son of Aethelred and Emma, it is true, had been brought up among his maternal relatives at the Norman court, and had grown fond of French manners and of the French language. He surrounded the English throne with French favourites, and gave up his court to their influences. But it was precisely in this first direct contact with the Romance element that the English nation became truly conscious of its own individual being, and that the instinct of self-preservation grew strong. The same spirit that animated the finally victorious national party, that stirred a Godwin and a Harold, filled also the annalist of Worcester, who wrote in warm and graphic language of the times of King Eadweard, of Godwin's banishment, and his return. Historical pursuits also received a fresh impulse in Abingdon, where a new recension of the English *Annals* was produced about 1046. It was based upon a transcript of the Winchester recension made at Canterbury and extend-

ing to 997, and upon a copy of the Worcester *Annals*, but it was enlarged with original matter. Continued to 1056, annalistic activity seems then to have slumbered in Abingdon for some years. It awoke again under King Harold; his campaign against Harold Hardrada and his victory at Stamford Bridge are the last events described in the Abingdon chronicle. The Worcester annalists continued their narrative, telling of William the Conqueror, and the great and decisive battle that marks the close of this period.

About the time when the events impended that were to direct the history, language, and literature of England into quite new channels, we see the national idea assert itself more powerfully than ever before in the English people, who boldly expressed their unity and independence in choosing Harold for their king. The English language had by that time reached a high degree of culture and of aptitude for the purposes of prose writing. Compared with former epochs, it had gained great flexibility and lightness of movement. The eloquence of the pulpit and the literature of theology in general were in full florescence. National historiography again began to show signs of vigorous life. The great age of poetry was indeed past; but it was not impossible that a new poetical epoch was near. New forms were developing in the popular poetry, and new ideas were beginning to spread. Even the song of *Byrhtnoth's Death*, which breathes the spirit of the Teutonic hero-age, as embodied in the institution of thegnhood, gives a more distinct expression of Christian views than is to be found in the earlier epic. The antagonism between the Christian and the Pagan, the trust in the Christian God, to which the French epos largely owes its peculiar character, find in the poem of *Byrhtnoth* emphatic utterance, though they are not indeed the impelling principle of the poem, and though, in the English song, there is quite lacking the idea of a historical mission of the nation to maintain and to extend the Church and Christendom. And new material, a material which the romantic Middle Age loved to shape and to adorn, had found access to English literature. The Late Greek romance of *Apollonius of Tyre*, which had most probably come to England in a Latin translation,[1] had

[1] The oldest of the forms of the romance now accessible, also wears the garb of the Latin language.

already been translated into flowing English by a dexterous pen. It was a story full of soft sentimentality and startling, ill-connected adventures; yet it was not without exciting situations and suggestive motives, which could even at the end of his career, inspire a Shakspere with some of his finest scenes. Its translation now disclosed a strange, new world to men who had been wont to delight in the songs of Beowulf, of Aethelstan, and of Byrhtnoth, a world in which all things were softer and more full of grace, but of smaller mould than at home. The Alexander saga had likewise just entered English territory, in a *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*,[1] and men read with amazement of the *Wonders of the Orient*.[2]

Thus, even before the Norman Conquest, there appeared in England phenomena presaging the chivalrous, romantic Middle Age. Germs of a development according to the spirit of this age existed; new germs would have been blown hither from south and east; and who will say that this soil could not have borne new fruit, even if the Norman conqueror had not sown it with new seed? It is easy to discover in the politics and social condition of the English realm under Eadweard and Harold, the causes which must necessarily have led to its ruin: the growing power of land proprietorship, the decline of the class of freemen, the formation of the new great earlships. It would be equally easy to point out the obstacles in the intellectual life of the nation which opposed a close blending of the old national thought with the ideas that began to rule the world in the eleventh century. Such reflections, however, are no less idle than those which, in defiance of history, seek to prove the internal vitality of what has been destroyed by external force. History is ever right, and needs no advocate.

[1] *Epistola Alexandri ad magistrum suum Aristotelem de situ Indiae. Narratiunculae anglice conscriptae*, Ed. T.O. Cockayne, p. 1. Cf. *Anglia*, IV. 139.
[2] *De rebus in Oriente mirabilibus. Ibid.*, p. 33.

BOOK II.

THE TRANSITION PERIOD.

Tant ont li conteor conté
Et li fableor tant fablé
Por lor contes ambeleter
Que tot ont feit fables sanbler.
WACE.*

I.

After the close of the ninth century, the Normans had settled on the north coast of France, on both sides of the Seine. In the year 912, their leader Hrolf (Rolf, Rollo), took in fief the *terra Northmannorum* of King Charles the Simple, married his liege-lord's daughter, and was baptised. Thus Normandy, enlarged in the course of time by the Bessin and the Côtentin, became a French vassal state of much greater political independence, but still less imbued with national colour than were the Danish districts in England. How cosmopolitan this Norse pirate-people, with its various foreign components, really was, first appeared in the presence of a culture, not only far superior to its own, but which, like the language forming its medium, was entirely foreign to it. Happy in lands and possessions, the Normans married French women, and to these naturally fell the training of their children. Hence everything became Christian and French among them in an incredibly short time. In the capital of the dukedom, Rouen, the language of the fathers had been forgotten as early as the reign of William Longsword, the son of Hrolf. The men of later generations retained only an obscure remembrance of the origin of their people. The Norman race in France in the eleventh century was not more distinct from the other population of northern Gaul than the people of one province generally differed from those of another.

Those traits, however, which made them distinguished were characteristic of the youth as well as the childhood of the race. A fresh glow of life and energy pervaded all their undertakings. They knew of no slackness; everything was done with ardour and thoroughness. They united, in rare degree, the fire of enthusiasm with a clear practical insight, with a fine instinct for the vital and future-building forces of

the time. The political organisation of their dukedom early attested that fitness for the organisation of states and for legislation which was to be later proved in larger tasks. In religion they adopted the strictest form of the orthodoxy of the time. Monachism found in Normandy the most favourable soil for its growth. A multitude of churches and convents arose, and united with them were schools whose fame soon sounded far and wide. The opening of the cloister school of Le Bec in 1046, by Lanfranc of Pavia, was of decided moment for the rise of learning in Normandy. Among the many pupils whom the fame of the great theologian drew thither, appeared one who was to become his teacher's coequal successor, Anselm of Aosta. The pious and profound thinker, whose bold speculations opened a new epoch in mediæval scholastic philosophy, now took his place beside the opponent of Berengar of Tours, the learned founder of Rome's domination in the field of dogma.

The ancient Norman impulse of migration and adventure found satisfaction in pilgrimages and in campaigns made by single bands of young Normans, either in the service of some foreign prince, or upon their own account in the retinue of a native noble. The pilgrims were sometimes warriors as well, and the campaigns often had religious aims. Wherever the struggle against the enemy of Christianity, against the Moors and Arabs, was waged, in Spain, in Sicily, in Apulia and Calabria, the Normans stood in the van and distinguished themselves for bravery and adroitness. They succeeded by their boldness and craftiness in conquering all of Lower Italy, and afterwards also Sicily. It was in Italy that the remarkable alliance between the papacy and the Normans was made which left its impress upon the history of the eleventh century, and had the most far-reaching consequences.

Thus the Normans were, in the middle of the eleventh century, at the head of western nations, famous for martial virtue and diplomatic skill; zealous sons of the church, pillars of the papacy, intermediaries of the French element, in whose formation they had been most influential; by their ideas, manners, and entire culture, the first representatives of chivalry, the first to realise that spirit which, not without their continued coöperation, was to yield at the close of the century its full results in the crusades.

And it was in the light of a crusade that Duke William, that mighty ruler, of iron will and exhaustless resources, made appear his expedition against England. He prevailed upon Rome to bless his undertaking, her interests again coinciding with those of the Norman, and help poured in upon him from all sides. His army was admirably equipped, and its Norman nucleus was strengthened by troops from the most diverse quarters of France, and from the adjacent countries. He crossed the Channel, landed, and marched to Hastings. No sooner had Harold, with great efforts, put down his northern foe, than he heard of William's landing, and summoning all his forces, he threw himself in the way of his new enemy. After a long and bloody struggle on the hills of Senlac, the quarrel was decided by Harold's death and the final overthrow of his army; and the groundwork was laid for the conquest of England, which the year 1070 saw accomplished.

After the introduction of Christianity, no event was so decisive in the development of the English nation as this conquest; its importance far surpassed that of a change of dynasty.

Through it England received a foreign aristocracy, foreign judges and officials, foreign bishops and abbots, and in large part, foreign monks in her cloisters. A new spirit penetrated the English polity, the spirit of a Romanic feudal state; though it here found an effective barrier in the national institutions, spared when possible, and above all in the power of a kingship, to which not only the tenants-in-chief, but every freeman in the realm had to swear fealty. A foreign language was spoken at the court and the castles of barons and knights. It found its way into the judicial courts, and gradually into the Great Council, as the national assembly grew from an English into a Norman body. Foreign manners became prevalent in the higher circles. Norman buildings rose everywhere. A Norman-French literature began to spring up in England.

The decisive battle of the year 1066, symbolical as it was in its progress and issue, marks a turning-point in English, and even in European history. From the deeds of Harold and his true followers comes a glimmer, as of the splendid sunset of the ancient Teutonic hero-age. Upon

the Normans falls the dawning light of the Romantic Middle Age, which now began to conquer the Teutonic realm of culture.

II.

When the Normans went into battle at Senlac, they struck up the *Song of Roland*. It was by no chance, then, that the oldest form of this most venerable and powerful of all French poems comes to us in an Anglo-Norman manuscript. The Norman race had become so firmly imbued with the French nationality that the memories, living chiefly in the Isle de France, of the former greatness of the Frankish empire and the sagas of Charlemagne and Roland, had become totally assimilated by them; and these sagas formed the basis of the French national epos. But this was not all. A positive and powerful influence for the development of that epos had proceeded from the Normans. Who but they had reanimated the ideas pervading those ancient traditions, and made them reflect the consciousness of the present: the idea of a heroism fighting in the service of God and the church, the idea of the great mission of the Franks? And again had not the Normans aided in the dispossession of the ancient Carlovingians by a new and purely French dynasty? This change of dynasty plainly betokened that a new nation had sprung from Roman-Celtic and Teutonic elements, and allowed the recollection of the original antagonism between those elements to disappear. Thus the Norman race assisted at the birth of the French national consciousness, and of its first utterance, the national epos.

The *Song of Roland* is the work of a people, more skilled in the poesy of the deed than the word. How reserved and sober is its manner, disdaining every ornament! But how powerful is the conception of the whole, how symmetrical and finished, how illumined in every part by the dominant idea, is the composition! Roland, the true vassal of his illustrious uncle, the rock of the Christian cause, which is also the cause of France, the knight without fear and without reproach, in whom the French nation perceived the ideal type of its own being, falls a sacrifice to foul treason and his own too high sense of honour. But his death is bloodily avenged; the enemies of the faith are completely overthrown, and the

cause which he has served through life is triumphant in spite of the hero's downfall, indeed through his downfall.

To give an idea of the spirit and style of this poem, we select the following passage, whose effect is not impaired by having been often quoted in histories of literature. It concerns the death of Roland:

Count Roland lay under a pine tree, his face turned toward Spain. Many things there came to his remembrance: the many lands the hero had conquered, sweet France, the men of his kindred, Charlemagne, his liege-lord, who reared him. Then he cannot keep back tears and sighs. But he would also not forget himself; he confesses his guilt and implores God's mercy: "Truth of the Father which never deceived, which awakened St. Lazarus from death, and saved Daniel from the lions, save my soul from all perils that threaten it on account of the sins that I have committed in my life." He offered to God his right glove; St. Gabriel received it from his hand. He held his head bowed upon his arm; with his hands folded he passed away. God sent him his cherubim and St. Michael *del Peril;* with them came St. Gabriel; they bear the Count's soul into Paradise.[1]

Like an Old German hero, Roland thinks in death of his victories, of his liege-lord, of his kindred; no tender feeling for the forsaken loved one intrudes, for Alda, who will not survive his fall. But he is mindful of his eternal welfare and confesses his sins; he dies a vassal, a champion of God, who takes him to himself. The Christian element has formed that close union with the Teutonic hero-spirit, which is characteristic of the French epos and the French nation. Such a blending was possible only in a people which, like the West-Franks and the Normans, had quite forgotten its pagan past together with its mother tongue, and which, with new elements, had moulded a new nationality.

This is a branch of the Neo-Latin family, whose spirit is stamped almost more clearly in the form than in the contents of its epos. The verse does not depend upon those syllables which, in virtue of their significance, are put forth with greater emphasis, but all syllables seem of nearly equal value, and the verse grows as if formed of rhythmical atoms, whose number determines its character. Their order affects it only in so far as the arsis at the end of the verse and in the cæsura requires an accented syllable. Instead of alliteration, which makes words and ideas conspicuous, we have end-rhyme in its original form, involving only the vowel-sounds (assonance),

[1] *Chanson de Roland,* Ed. Theodor Müller, v. 2375–2396.

by means of which the unity of each line is indicated, and the single lines are joined in the unity of larger rhythmical systems. These systems are as yet exceedingly simple; continuous assonance combines an unlimited number of ten-syllabled lines into a whole, complete and distinct in matter as well as form.

Effects in style are produced with equally simple means. If this kind of epic diction employs appositions and epithets more profusely than prose speech—and this is true only within limits,—yet these appositions and epithets are in themselves no more sensuous or figurative than those of daily life, and there is nothing enigmatical or poetical about them. Upon the whole, images or metaphors occur very rarely, and but one simile has been discovered in the entire *Song of Roland.* The construction is little involved, and is quite unadapted to the expression of a complex thought-texture. One brief sentence simply follows another without interweaving, and often without connection. Words are arranged with more freedom than in the later French, but this freedom is sufficiently limited to make the arrangement always lucid.

If then the poet attains such grand effects with such humble means, it is because his soul is filled with grand ideas and feelings, because he sees with great clearness and precision the pictures and scenes he would portray, because he is able to retain mentally his survey of both the objective and subjective order of events, finally because he is content with the simplest expression. Hence the animation and vividness of his style, which sometimes inspires, sometimes moves and thrills us; hence his ability to keep distinct the true sequence of things, to grade the themes according to their importance, and thus to hold our interest and to increase it. His field of view is indeed limited, and his æsthetic, as well as his ethical sense is one-sided. He has not learned to differentiate similar situations by arts of presentation; he rises to true power only when the action reaches a climax. It is the poetry of a gifted, but still slightly developed people, whose soul is entirely filled by a few great ideas and glows for these ideas with youthful fire.

The spirit that had created the *Song of Roland* gave birth to the crusades. Under the influence of the revolution in thought and manners arising from the crusades, the national

epic of the French entered a new epoch of growth and propagation. An enlarged culture had more sharply drawn the lines separating the higher classes from the masses; a chivalrous and courtly poetry began to flourish, and the popular song could not have escaped speedy deterioration and decay, had not the caste of wandering players and singers, the *jongleurs*, taken it up, and, as a medium between the various classes of society, continued the traditions of the national epos. Fostered by the *jongleurs*, the epos gained in scope and diversity, in wealth of character and situations, what it lost in intrinsic value. There arose a great number of independent poems, whose germs had already existed in the popular song, but which now received a complete epic mounting and decoration. The memory of the great national conflict, lasting for centuries, against the unbelievers, provided exhaustless material. There were also the feuds of the later Carlovingians with their vassals, feuds which, in the epic song, are nearly all fought out by Charlemagne himself. More rarely, the composition is biographical, whether concerning Charlemagne or other members of his house. But in the remoter provinces there was no lack of independent sagas, forming special epic cycles, though their structure, too, was determined by the attraction proceeding from the centre.

Anglo-Norman England remained somewhat alien to this entire epic development as it culminated in France after the close of the eleventh century—or rather, it shared it but receptively. The Normans beyond the Channel did not cease to listen gladly to the songs of Charlemagne and his battles, of his vassals and his foes, to receive well the epic singers who came over from the continent, and to show them hospitality; but the time when the Norman race had taken an active part in the formation of the French national epic was past. Numerous as were the germs of epic production the Norman had scattered in France, he did nothing to promote their development. Severed from the French nation, he felt self-sufficient in England, and he soon began to be at home on this foreign soil. He here found himself confronted by new and great tasks. How would he have been able to perform them, had he continued, as in former times, the same close relation with the French national genius? There even arose a feeling of antagonism among the Normans of Nor-

mandy against the true Frenchman, a feeling which, from the middle of the twelfth century onwards, fast grew more bitter, and finally turned into keen hatred.

But this was not all. With the eleventh century ended the Norman heroic age. The flame of enthusiasm for youthful ideals subsided. The sober quality directed to the practical and useful, as well as a certain tendency to irony, to light mockery, reappeared more strongly in the race.

It is significant that even before the close of the eleventh century, Norman poetry could produce a work like the *Charlemagne*.

The poem belongs to the French national cycle, but its position there is exceptional. One is almost tempted to regard it as a parody of the *chansons de geste*.

The poet draws from the popular tradition, touching Charlemagne's journey to the Holy Land, and circulated as early as the tenth century. The relics in St. Denis were also connected with it. In the poem, Charlemagne, returning from the Orient, brings with him the chalice which Christ used at the Lord's Supper, and this is not unimportant in considering the origin of the Graal-saga.

The Norman poet interwove with this venerable tradition a theme which would have harmonised better with the tone of the *fabliau* than that of the epos. Charlemagne and his twelve peers, at the court of Constantinople, deport themselves like swaggerers, and take it upon themselves to execute all sorts of tricks, some of them of doubtful morality. Forced to make good their jocose boasts, they get out of their embarrassment only by supernatural aid. That the reputation of these heroes is, nevertheless, not dragged in the dust, that Charlemagne especially does not impair his dignity, and that, in this strange amalgamation of a religious and a frivolous secular element, the former receives no injury, is a strong testimonial to the tact and talent of the poet.

One of the many attractive qualities of the *Charlemagne* is its metre. The epic tirade of the poem does not flow in lines of ten syllables, but in Alexandrines, which we first meet here, and which, with this sole exception, were long unknown to the French national epic.

Learning and literature could be more readily transplanted to England than living popular poetry.

France was then, and became ever more the centre of learned culture in Europe, and Normandy took an active part in the intellectual movement which passed through the country.

Scholarship had not failed, even before the Conquest, to form relations between England and the adjacent continent. Englishmen finished their training in French or Flemish convents; French or Flemish ecclesiastics went to England, where their knowledge and industry were eagerly welcomed. What an impulse must this intercourse have gained when England was joined to Normandy by a thousand threads, when Lanfranc sat upon the archiepiscopal seat of Canterbury and began energetically to romancise the English church and clergy! England, though not at once its English-speaking population, was entirely drawn into the stream of scholarly life which circulated upon the continent. The fame and prosperity of the French schools were most potent in maintaining this intellectual intercourse. The lustre which the university of Paris began to shed in the twelfth century tended above all to promote it. Thousands of youths, eager for knowledge, wandered from the British island to the chief seat of scholastic learning, with which the university of Oxford, then in its first stages, could not seriously compete. The new theories set up by French thinkers, the conflicts fought in the French church and theology, were at once echoed in England.

A rich, learned, and ecclesiastical literature in the Latin language arose in England soon after the Conquest. Among the many Norman and other foreign ecclesiastics who came to England in the train of the conqueror, in order there to procure livings and stations of honour, to fill newly founded monasteries, or to take the best places in earlier foundations, were many who united scholarly culture with vigorous productivity. They were throughout far superior to the English clergy in their acquaintance with the Latin classical writers, and in the purity of their Latin style as well as their dialectic training. A portion of the native clergy soon joined the new-comers, learned from them, and worked on in their spirit; some even in distant lands gathered new learning, while others lingered in a sort of national isolation upon an antiquated level. In the second and third generation,

besides immigrants and men of English blood, the sons of the conquerors themselves, in part children of mixed nationality, and also Welshmen, bore aloft the torch of learning, which attracted an ever-increasing number of disciples about it.

The most diverse branches of learning and science were cultivated in England, and works were produced in nearly every field.

As archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc wrote, about 1080, his famous *Liber scintillarum.* He there defended the theory of transubstantiation as the orthodox doctrine of the eucharist, and strove to prove heretical the opposite view of Berengar of Tours, which was closely related to the ideas of the Old English church. Anselm, who died in 1109, composed in England his *De incarnatione Verbi*, and there he began the tract *Cur deus homo?*, which he finished in Italy. In England, too, he wrote, in later years, his treatise *De voluntate*, and the profound investigation, *De concordia praescientiae et praedestinationis et gratiae Dei cum libero arbitrio.* The monk Osberne of Gloucester wrote, in 1150, a commentary to the Pentateuch and the book of Judges. The learned Robertus Pullus lectured at Oxford upon the Holy Scriptures, and later (1144 and '45) became cardinal in Rome and chancellor of the Romish church. He compiled a sort of compendium of theological learning (*Libri sententiarum*). Hugo of Rouen (died 1164), the acute author of the *Quaestiones theologicae*, Robert de Melun (died 1167), whose speculations took bold flight in his *Summa sententiarum* (or *Summa theologiae*), both belonged to England during part of their lives; the latter having been born and having died in that country.

It is not easy to find one's way through the ascetic and devotional literature, especially through the mass of lives of the saints, which appeared in that age. Some of these legends served to enlarge the circle of admirers of many saints ignored by the Old English authors, especially Irish and Welsh worthies, while some English saints found difficulty in maintaining their position before the sharp-scented Norman orthodoxy. But a finer taste, a better Latinity, gradually came into vogue even in these truly monkish fields of literature, since the greatest writers did not disdain to labour

in them. We would next mention an author who is noteworthy, neither on account of great classical learning nor æsthetic culture, but for a subjective intensity related to mysticism; this is Ailred (Aethelred) of Rievaux (died 1166), a man narrowed by monasticism, severely ascetic, but filled by the warmest Christian charity. He was the author of the *Speculum charitatis*, of the dialogue *De spirituali amicitia*, of the *Liber de institutione inclusarum*, and many other theological and historical writings.

The mathematical and natural sciences were ardently cultivated. As early as 1082 appeared Gerland, the author of a *Computus* and a treatise on the *Abacus*. Roger, surnamed Infans, composed a new *Computus* (or *Compotus*, as he writes it,) about the year 1124. By this time, Aethelard (Aethelward) of Bath had already begun to make accessible to the West the more richly-developed and bolder learning of the Arabs, which he had sought at its fountain-head. He made translations of both astronomical and mathematical writings, including the elements of Euclid, and more original compilations and treatises. He was animated by a passionate love of scientific knowledge, a passion which he had expressed under the veil of a graceful allegory in his treatise *De eodem et diverso*. He bravely fought the blind faith in authority dominant in the West, and asserted the rights of reason, while he strove above all to establish in his *Quaestiones naturales* the reasonableness of the new physical theories derived from the Arabs. In 1140 the Anglo-Norman Robert de Retines sat with his student friend the Dalmatian Hermann at the feet of Arabian teachers at Evora in Spain, where he was chiefly occupied with astronomical studies, which he interrupted to translate the Koran into Latin, at the wish of the abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable.

With scientific learning, Latin poetry also took a new impetus. We have a poem on the campaign of Hastings (*De bello Hastingensi*, or *de Hastingae praelio*) by Bishop Guy of Amiens, who accompanied Queen Matilda to England, as almoner, in the year 1068. If in this piece the form is much inferior to the substance, the epigrams of Godfrey of Winchester (died 1107) denote great skill, happily caught from Martial, in the management of his poetical resources, as well as a purity of style and language noteworthy for the Middle

Ages. Again, Reginald of Canterbury (about 1120) united considerable classical culture with great technical skill; but, fettered by the charm of rhyme, he wearies the ear and offends the taste, in his long-winded legend of St. Malchus, by an unbroken chain of leonine hexameters. He sometimes finds the right tone, however, in minor poems, and he sings a charming hymn of praise, in rhymed half-hexameters, to his evidently South-French home Fagia.[1] Not long before the middle of the twelfth century, Laurence of Durham told, in his *Hypognosticon*, the biblical history in well-constructed, flowing distichs,—a work showing industrious study of classical authors, and not deficient in fine ideas and elegance of expression; whereas in the *Consolatio pro morte amici*, following the footsteps of Boëthius, he interwove in his prose dialogue varying rhythmical passages, not inartistically constructed. Laurence's contemporary, Henry of Huntingdon, known chiefly as a historian, also successfully tried his powers in didactic, lyrical, and epigrammatic poetry.

Most important, however, for the uses of the present age, is the historical literature of that time. There had existed a Norman historiography since the end of the tenth century. Dudo of St. Quentin then wrote, in vivid, lofty, but sometimes bombastic style, and often in barbarous Latin, his three books on the manners and deeds of the earlier Norman dukes (to the death of Richard I., in 996). The somewhat simpler and terser *Historiae Normannorum* by William of Jumièges belongs to the second half of the eleventh century. Depending entirely upon his predecessor for the period of the earlier dukes, he carried his account beyond the battle of Senlac. Soon after 1135 he himself had a successor who continued his work, and others later supplied interpolations. Another William, named de Poitiers, from the city where he received his first training, upon his return to Normandy, served the conqueror, first as soldier, then as court chaplain, and he finally became archdeacon of Lisieux. He described the life and acts of his mighty patron in a work breathing a spirit of warmest panegyric, but containing a mass of interesting facts. This was his *Gesta Guilelmi ducis Normanno-*

[1] That is, in hexameters with middle and end-rhyme, according to the following scheme:

rum et regis Anglorum ; its style denotes a not unsuccessful attempt to emulate the classical models, from which indeed many flourishes are borrowed.

In England, too, arose, after the Conquest, a lively interest in historical studies and it extended to the highest ranks of the clergy. As an example we may cite Ernulf of Beauvais, abbot of Peterborough (1107), and afterwards bishop of Rochester (1114). The student of history owes to him the important collection of records known by the name of *Textus Roffensis.* Numerous biographies and local chronicles originated in the most diverse places. There were also works of broader purpose and more general import. The English monk Eadmer of Canterbury, the warm follower and admirer of Anselm, recounted the history of his own time in the *Historia novorum,* embracing the period from 1066 to 1122. This is a very important authority to the historian, and the author added a most valuable supplement to it in his *Vita Anselmi.* Another historian, Ordericus Vitalis (1075–1143), was the son of a married priest of Orleans, but was himself born in England, on the banks of the Severn, and was brought up there until his tenth year. He wrote a *Historia ecclesiastica* in thirteen books in the abbey of St. Evroult in Normandy, where he spent nearly all his later life. He made use of many and most various authorities, especially French and Norman, as well as English, and at times he inserted his originals entire into his text. The parts of this vast work did not originate at the same time, nor all in the order finally assigned to them. Ordericus's history offers first a chronicle extending from the birth of Christ to the author's time, and having special reference to ecclesiastical matters. The history of the Norman wars and the Norman church is then traced to the death of the Conqueror, and the historical account continues down to the year 1141. The work of Ordericus is a mine, rich in a material, not fully purified, but very attractive and valuable, especially to the historian of culture. On the whole, it is an important authority for the period after the Conquest.

Florence of Worcester and Simeon of Durham, both of whom wrote and died before Ordericus, stand somewhat apart from the stream of Norman historiography, although they were not untouched by the historical atmosphere that pervaded that age; they turned to the past life of England.

Florence's *Chronicon ex chronicis*, carried from the creation of the world to the year of the author's death (1118), is essentially a compilation of the universal chronicle (extending to 1082) of Marianus Scotus,[1] which it continues, and of the English *Annals* of Worcester. As a historical authority, it is in itself much inferior to the continuation (to 1141) which it soon received from an anonymous hand. The *Historia de gestes regum Anglorum* (to 1129), by Simeon of Durham, is more valuable, though not more original; the author was able to draw, not only from Florence and editions of the English annals accessible to us, but also from lost Northumbrian sources.

Since Beda, who, moreover, was chiefly a church historian, no writer of English history had been found equal to this task; for the excellent qualities of the annals written in the national language were confined to the descriptions of single battles, undertakings, occurrences, or to brief retrospects, and writers like Aethelweard, like Florence and Simeon, followed the annals as regards form and matter. A connected, pragmatical handling of the material, which had swollen to measureless proportions since Beda's day, a treatment based upon cautious use of the now still more copious sources, and carried out in an even, appropriate style, did not exist. But soon after Simeon, there appeared in William, a monk and librarian in the convent of Malmesbury, a writer who tried his powers in the production of such a work. Given to study from tender youth, brooding over books, William acquired a great store of reading in the most diverse fields of literature. But his favourite pursuit was history, and he may early have become conscious of the deep chasm which yawned between the ancient masters of history, and the modern annalists and chroniclers, especially those of his own country. The question doubtless soon arose in him whether this chasm might not somehow be bridged. Of sound judgment and not uncultivated taste, William was the man to make a correct choice from the rich material which his learning opened to him, to connect and judiciously to group details, and to present them in pleasing form. Yet criticism in the sense of our time is as little to be found in his works as

[1] By birth an Irishman, who lived in Germany, first as monk and then as an immured hermit, and who died at Mainz in 1082 or 1083.

a profound view of historical development. He adopted without scruple many errors and fables, and the more artistic form of his composition not rarely endangered the integrity of his matter. His range was, however, broad for a monk of the twelfth century, and he was in the main just. He was the offspring of mixed parentage, we may suppose, of a Norman father and an English mother; and hence he was able to do justice to the excellences of both races, and not to underestimate their faults. Above all, he loved his country, and particularly the spot where he lived, and where centuries before Aldhelm had held sway, and now lay buried. He was strongly attracted by the past of English history. Its more ancient epochs after the introduction of Christianity appeared to him in an ideal light, while the period just before the Conquest, as he saw it, was somewhat dimmed by the clouds in which Norman prelates and courtly historiographers sought to envelop it. His writings are very valuable for the investigator of Old English history, and not least so for the student of literature. First among them should be mentioned his *Historia regum Anglorum*, extending from the English immigration to 1120, to which was later added the *Historiae novellae*, embracing the period from 1126 to 1143; and further, his four books *De gestis pontificum Anglorum*, his life of Aldhelm, and his work *De antiquitatibus Glastoniensis ecclesiae*.

As a historian, Henry, archdeacon of Huntingdon, does not rank so high as William of Malmesbury, but he is well-nigh equally important as an authority, and in another respect is especially attractive. In his youth he had written Latin verse, and, in the year 1135, he had handled in his *De summitatibus rerum*, the then burning question as to the time of the end of the world. He then undertook, at the wish of Bishop Alexander of Lincoln, a history of England, which he carried first to the year 1135, and later to 1154. Beda and the English *Annals* were his chief authorities for the Old English period, and he often merely copied or translated them. But he likewise drew from oral tradition and from popular poetry. He translated from the *Annals* into his Latin, though not without some errors, the beautiful song on the *Battle of Brunanburh;* he interwove in his prose several verses from the now vanished works of Middle Latin

poets; and, judging from analogy, the rhetorical colour of his style, as well as the picturesque details of his narrative, not rarely seem to be the reflection of a popular song no longer extant. The account of the Anglo-Norman period is rich in new and weighty information, particularly the epoch about which Henry professes to write as an eye-witness, or from the statements of eye-witnesses and well-informed persons.

In the midst of this circle of historians we also find Geoffrey of Monmouth, where he has almost the air of an intruder. He became bishop of St. Asaph in the year 1152 and died about 1154. He was not unlikely a native of Wales; undoubtedly he was acquainted with the Cymric language. He was, moreover, versed in the legendary lore of several nations, was well read in the poets, and himself possessed no slight liking for, and skill in story-telling. So he wrote, in the fourth decade of the century (about 1132–35), his *Historia Britonum*, a monument of stupendous delusion; but in which he seems to have been the deceiver rather than the deceived. The Celtic world in England had been thrown by the Conquest into a sort of ferment. The ancient enemies of the British race had been crushed by a foreign power, and their attempts to shake off the strange yoke had been terribly punished; so terribly that the English population was decimated in the extreme south-west of the island, and the Britons rose again for a time. New hopes and ancient memories awoke among the Celts, and the bracing intellectual atmosphere that entered the island with the Normans, the cosmopolitan character which they, unlike the Angles, exhibited, as well in literature as in all other things, yielded fresh impulses and fresh means to give definite shape to the thoughts thus engendered. Men dreamed of the restoration of the former greatness of the British realm, and told the tales of Merlin and his prophecies. Scholars ascribed the origin of the British people to Troy, as had long before been done concerning the Franks. The long interval between the settlement of Britons in Albion and the beginning of authentic history seemed veiled in mysterious gloom, from which a few vague legendary forms now and then emerged. But the period of the Saxon immigration was peopled by many heroes celebrated in bardic songs, though their glory

was beginning to be eclipsed by the name of Arthur. This name first denoted a heroic leader of the Britons, a conqueror of the Saxons in twelve battles, and later, when the British traditions had received a richer cast and form under the influence of the Charlemagne-saga, a mighty king and world-conqueror. Arthur's heroic deeds and the origin of the Britons, whose name is connected with a Roman consul called Brutus, were treated in a Latin history of the Britons, of most doubtful age. Its author bears very diverse names, but is best known by that of Nennius. This work arose perhaps not long before the time of Geoffrey, and upon it he founded his new *Historia Britonum* or *Historia regum Britanniae*. He drew from ancient poets and prose writers, as well as the most various traditions and fables, and often gave rein to his own fancy. He thus clothed the skeleton with flesh and blood, and submitted to an amazed world and to his colleagues William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, who had heard nothing of these things, a long complete genealogy of British rulers, together with an account of the cities they had founded, the deeds they had done, and the events of their lives. The learned world now heard for the first time of Locrine, of Gorboduc, of Leir (Lear) and his daughters. But above all the figure of Arthur now stood forth in brilliant light, a chivalrous king and hero, endowed and guarded by supernatural powers, surrounded by brave warriors and a splendid court, a man of marvellous life, and a tragic death. Accurate chronological and geographical statements, a thread of authenticated English and general history, gave to this narrative an air of historical fidelity; and this was heightened by the fiction of a British (or Cymric) book, which Geoffrey professed to have received from Walter, archdeacon of Oxford, and to have used conscientiously as his authority.

If there were many scholars who saw through this tissue of lies, the great mass were carried away by it. Men believed the stories presented with so much gravity by a Benedictine and a bishop, and they certainly found their contents most fascinating. The sense of the marvellous and the mysterious was nourished not less than the sense of the chivalric and heroic, or the love for the glitter and splendour of a kingly life; and Geoffrey's rhetorical, even poetical, style brought to bear with their full force all these elements.

The effect of the work was therefore tremendous. Geoffrey's influence grew through the entire course of the Middle Ages, and spreading in a thousand channels, reached far into modern times, down to Shakspere, nay to Tennyson.

The *Historia Britonum* was epitomised, before the middle of the twelfth century, by Alfred of Beverley, and he appended to his extract from Geoffrey an account from other authors of the English, and of the Norman period (to 1129), in his *Annales sive Historia de gestis regum Britanniae.* About the same time, Geoffrey's fictions entered the Norman national literature.

III.

Anglo-Norman poetry, to judge from its remnants, made its *début*, in the beginning of the twelfth century, with didactic rhymes and legendary poems, to which were soon added chronicles in verse. The connection with the Latin literature of the epoch is clearly evident.

As regards metre, these poems were the first in which non-strophic couplets were employed. The older French poesy was strophic throughout, because it was sung, though in part merely, in the manner of a recitative. This is likewise true of the legendary poetry; not only in those cases where, as in the *Chanson d'Alexis*, it made use of the epic measure and continuous assonance (the epic tirades having, however, a fixed number of lines), but also in poems where it offers a series of shorter lines rhymed in pairs, as in the *Song of Leodegar.* Learned treatises could indeed be put into rhyme and metre, but they could be sung less readily, and as soon as men began to read and recite, it was no longer necessary to make a pause after every two or three pairs of lines. Hence the non-strophic couplet followed of itself. Another result of reading and writing in the place of singing was the conversion of assonance into rhyme, though at first the latter was not used without occasional liberties.

Henry I. was a pupil of Lanfranc, and, as his surname Beauclerc seems to indicate, himself gave proof of a literary interest. Under him wrote Philipe de Thaun, whose family probably originally resided in the city of Than, near Caen, in Normandy, and may in part have emigrated to England.

About 1113 or 1119 he produced his *Computus* or *Cumpoz*. Like his Latin predecessors, he treats, in the interest of the church service, the divisions of time, the zodiac, the moon, etc., as well as the church seasons of fasting and festival, now and then adding an allegorical interpretation. His authorities were Beda, Gerland, and other computers named by him. This work was dedicated to the author's uncle, Hunfrei de Thaun, chaplain of the royal seneschal Yun (Eudo). It has come to us in incomplete form. There is not much to regret in this, however; for the rather unpoetical topic gained little by the poetical form adopted, and Philipe's short six-syllabled[1] verse, in which the rhyme so often recurs, impaired his style, as well by the excessive curtailment as by the meaningless expansion of his sentences. He displayed greater skill in his next poem, the *Bestiaire*, whose subject-matter is more entertaining. He dedicated it to Adelaide de Louvain, who had married King Henry in 1121. The *Bestiaire* is an Anglo-Norman *Physiologus*, whose Latin sources are not yet accurately established, but which systematically separates the "beasts" (*bestes*) from the birds, and then, apparently as an afterthought, adds to these two divisions a third on stones. Philipe wrote this poem, too, mainly in lines of six syllables. He chose in the third section, however, a more convenient metre, the octosyllabic. This measure had been employed, with the strophic form, as early as the tenth century (compare the poems on the *Passion of Christ* and on *Leodegar*); and in the non-strophic form, it was to become the prevailing metre for scholastic poesy, for the romance of chivalry, and for the poetical tale.

Before Philipe's *Physiologus* another poem by another hand had been dedicated to Queen Adelaide: the *Legend of St. Brandan*. Its author called himself Benedeit (Benedict), with the designation *apostoile* (*apostolicus*), which surely cannot here mean pope, as it usually does. It is significant that the Anglo-Norman poetry, from the very beginning, celebrated Celtic saints, and did not confine itself to such as had taken a part in the conversion of England, as had the Scottish monks in Northumbria. The legend of Brandan, it is true, was peculiarly suitable to an age in which the cru-

[1] The couplet of lines in six syllables can, from its origin, be regarded as an Alexandrine with leonine rhymes.

sades flourished, and the eyes of men were directed longingly toward the far-away East, with its hidden wonders. Brandan was an Irish abbot of the sixth century; in the legend, founded upon the tales of Irish sailors, he makes a journey of discovery to the earthly paradise, the *terra repromissionis sanctorum*. The holy abbot sails far over boundless seas, accompanied by seventeen of his monks, not all of whom are again to see their native land. Upon this journey they encounter strange adventures, marvellous creatures, often of frightful, and sometimes of pleasing or venerable aspect, enchanted islands, danger and distress, from which God's hand ever saves them. They even glance in passing at the terrors of hell, and meet the traitor Judas upon a rock in the sea, a helpless victim of the waves, which make their horrid sport with him, on the few days when he is allowed to take breath after the torments of hell. Finally, after more than seven years of wandering, they reach paradise, which is veiled in thick clouds and surrounded by a wall of gold and precious stones. An angel receives them, and opens to them the gate guarded by dragons and a fiery sword, and lets them gaze upon some of the delights and wonders which it contains. He then dismisses them to return home enlightened and comforted. This legend had been written down in Latin in the tenth century, or perhaps earlier, with the title *Navigatio sancti Brendani*. The Anglo-Norman poet drew from this source, and, in the main, followed it faithfully; three adventures are omitted by him, but the hell-torments of Judas are specified for each day of the week. In his verse the legend appears at its best, possessing, as it does, the naïve charm of mystery, though it has likewise the blemish of a fancy distorted by prejudice. His style is simple and clear, and not without a tinge of that severe elegance which distinguished the Norman clerical poetry generally. The metrical form of this poem is peculiar. There are short couplets, all of whose lines literally number eight syllables. But considered from the standing-point of Romanic versification, we must say that couplets of octosyllabics with masculine rhymes alternate with couplets of seven-syllabled lines having double endings. Is this to be ascribed to the influence of English versification, according to which

the double ending beginning with a long syllable was supposed to have two accents?[1]

Philipe, as well as Benedeit, in the course of time, had many successors.

Poetical translations of the distichs of Cato and the *Proverbia Salomonis* appeared not long after them, as well as poetical sermons. But historical poetry stood forth above all in the reign of King Stephen. The position it took at the very first, international and intermediary, was most remarkable. It deemed nothing foreign to it that had happened on English soil.

In the fifth decade of the century, Geoffrey Gaimar wrote a history of the Britons (*Estorie des Bretons*), which is unfortunately lost. We know that his authority was the *Historia Britonum;* his patroness, Constance, wife of Raul Fitz Gilebert, at whose commission he wrote, had obtained a copy from the Count of Gloucester through the mediation of the nobleman Walter Espec, who dwelt in Yorkshire. Like Alfred of Beverley, Gaimar then added the English to the British history (*Estorie des Engleis*). He rendered this according to various authorities, following in great part the Winchester *Annals*, and continued it from the Conquest to the end of the eleventh century. He expresses at the close—for the *Estorie des Engleis* is preserved—an intention of describing the history of Henry I., but he does not seem to have carried it out. Another poet named David had, at about the same time, also tried his hand upon this material, as Gaimar informs us. Gaimar's English history is composed in short couplets[2] and in flowing, often animated language. The poet at times enhances the charm of his narrative by interweaving popular traditions; as when he relates at length the Danish-English saga of Havelok, which we shall consider later.

Geoffrey's history was again rendered in verse about ten years later, in a version which eclipsed that of Gaimar, and may have contributed to its downfall. This more modern

[1] Compare, for instance, the following couplets in *King Horn*, ed. Wissman, v. 5–8:

Kíng he wás bi wéstè,
so lónge só hit léstè.
Gódhild hét his quén,
faírer nón mí3te bén.

[2] By the term "short couplets," when used by itself, and with regard to French verse, we mean those consisting of eight-syllabled lines.

version arose in Normandy, whose literature for this period cannot, without some violence, be separated from the Anglo-Norman. Its author was called Wace (*i. e.* Wistace, Eustace).

Born not long after the beginning of the twelfth century on the island of Jersey, Wace received his first school training at Caen, and completed his studies in the Isle de France, and probably in Paris. Having returned to Caen, he seems then to have become a teacher (*clers lisanz*) in one of the schools of that city. His leisure hours were given to poetry. He himself tells us that during his long stay in Caen, he translated a large number of Latin writings into the Romance language (*romans*), which here of course means the Norman dialect, and at that time such work was generally done in the form of poetry. He doubtless put chiefly legends into verse; the demand for them being the greater, as it was customary on the feast-days of the church to explain to the congregation in their own language, and usually in verse, the occasion of the festival, or, what generally amounted to the same thing, to recite the saint's legend of the day. In his day, Aelfric had written his alliterative lives of the saints for a similar purpose.

A true Norman, Wace was fain to apply himself to subjects that were popular among his people, and could lay claim to a certain national significance. Hence he wrote the life of that Nicholas of Patras whose bones Norman merchants of Bari, in southern Italy, had stolen in 1087 from the church at Myra in Lycia, and had brought home. Thence the fame of the saint, and the knowledge of the continuing miraculous power of his mortal remains, had spread quickly over Europe and especially in Normandy. In the same spirit, he celebrated in another poem the feast of the conception, fixed at the instance of William the Conqueror, and appropriately known by the name *la fête aux Normands*.

He does not seem to have attempted larger tasks until after the year 1150. When the son of Geoffrey of Anjou and Matilda ascended the English throne as Henry II., Wace was occupied with the translation of the history of Geoffrey of Monmouth. This he dedicated after its completion (1155) to Henry's consort Eleanor of Poitou, who was sung by the minstrels of the time. Perhaps the benefice at Bayeux, granted to the poet by Henry, was a recom-

pense for this dedication. Wace's *Geste des Bretons*, or, as the poem, owing to its Celtic subject-matter, came to be called in the course of time, Wace's *Brut d'Engleterre*,[1] served greatly to spread the fables of the ancient British kings. Thus it tended powerfully to develop them, at least the legends of Arthur, who, in the romances of French poets and of their German imitators, took the name of Artus.

Tales of Arthur were told in the lesser as well as the greater Britanny, and the more his history, as given in Geoffrey's account, became known, the greater was the temptation to bring all sorts of traditions, sagas, and tales into direct or indirect relation with him, and the more active became the intellectual intercourse in this field between Armorica and the British isle. What new things were thus sung of him by Briton *jongleurs*, who early acquired great celebrity, were repeated in Normandy, in Anjou, and soon in the rest of France, in the French language, and the conditions were probably similar in England. As early as the time of Wace, the Britons recounted many fables of the Round Table, which Arthur was said to have founded. Geoffrey does not seem to have known anything of this institution; Wace was content to mention its establishment, but he shrugged his shoulders at the stories connected with it. The doubtful quality of the materials involved in his work, made him all the more cautious with regard to oral tradition. Nothing less than the authority of a grave Latin author would suffice to make the Arthurian legend in any way credible to him, and he would give nothing but the truth. In a later poem[2] he alluded to a forest of Broceliande and the marvellous spring, which, according to Briton stories, was to be found there, but he added that he had visited the spot and experienced no miracles. Wace's additions to the narrative of Geoffrey are inconsiderable; he owes them chiefly to Latin sources, especially to legends of the saints. He is wont, however, to expand and adorn the narrative of his author in the description of battles, festivals, and the like; as for instance, when music is given, he enumerates the different kinds of instruments used. According to mediæval stand-

[1] And at last simply *Brut*. Thence in more recent times it was called *Roman de Brut*, that Brutus doubtless being meant from whom the Britons were said to be descended. In Cymric, however, *Brut* means *history, chronicle*.

[2] In the *Romance of Rollo*.

ards he is in this not disloyal to his authority; but the entire tone of the work thus becomes more animated and richly coloured, and distinctly reflects the chivalric age to which Wace belonged.

In later years Wace began, in honour of his royal patron, who was descended from the race of Rollo (Hrolf), a history of the Normans, *Geste des Normans*, now generally known under the name *Roman de Rou*. This work apparently suffered a long interruption before he had finished the reign of Duke Richard I., and was then continued by him to the year 1106. When he laid down his pen (after 1170), he had lost the favour of the king, of whose parsimony he complains, and another had been made historiographer in his place. The *Romance of Rollo* worthily closes the works of the patriotic poet. In this Wace relates the history of his race and of his dukes, founding it upon the historical books of Dudo de St. Quentin and William de Jumièges, as well as other, in part, unknown authorities. His style is pleasing and animated, and on certain occasions, as in the portrayal of the battle of Senlac, the rich abundance of details and the enthusiasm which breathes in the simple words of the poet, do not fail to produce a strong effect. He frequently drew from oral traditions, when trustworthy persons and not *jongleurs* were their bearers. He interwove many tales bequeathed from father to son, and told them so well that Uhland deemed some of them worthy of translation. Unfortunately we have in its original form only the second, though much the larger part of the *Romance of Rollo*. We know the first part only through a later recast, in which the metre in the portion beginning with the appearance of Rollo is changed, Wace's short couplets being converted into epic tirades of Alexandrines.[1]

Wace may pass for the typical representative of the older Norman poesy, in so far as it is not clothed in popular forms. The characteristics of this poetry are scarcely anywhere revealed so fully as with him; in his manner, severity and re-

[1] At the beginning of the part in Alexandrines, the poet says he intends to shorten the "*vers*." *Vers* of course does not mean *lines*, but as usual, rhythmical sections of some length, and these do certainly become shorter, the contents being the same, when the measures which compose them grow longer. But since the sections formed out of rhyming couplets are determined only by the subject-matter, and may therefore vary greatly in length, this remark only has meaning if the writer of the Alexandrines had short couplets before him, which he remodelled in the epic measure.

serve are mingled with a sort of playful *naïveté*. The diction has no great sweep or fulness, though it by no means lacks finish and elegance. It is preëminently simple and transparent, and moves easily in smoothly flowing short couplets. His expression is laconic, and given to antithesis, being well adapted to convey the popular proverbial wisdom. The same idea is usually expressed by the same word, so that there is no lack of emphatical repetitions. The same thought sometimes reappears in a new form, either directly after the form first chosen, or after an interval, at the close of a digression, when the poet returns with ease and precision into the direct path. He likes to amplify in enumeration. But nowhere is there a massing of phrase or varying repetitions which would impair clearness and smoothness. Nowhere do we feel that his is a soul stirred by passion, that seeks to correct and surpass itself in expression; sequence is never broken, nor the logico-grammatical structure of the sentence disturbed.

The poet works more from the head than the heart; and since his thought is not very deep nor his fancy very lofty, he is able to instruct and amuse, but neither to thrill nor to exalt.

IV.

The English language could not maintain itself in the foreground of literature against the twofold competition of the Latin, which more than ever held the ear of scholars, and of the Anglo-Norman which was the idiom of power and of fashion. It withdrew more and more into obscurity, as if to gather strength for better times.

The fortunes of the English *Annals* were most significant in this respect.

The Parker manuscript of the *Annals* of Winchester had been kept in Christ Church, Canterbury, since the first half of the eleventh century. Soon after Lanfranc's elevation to the archbishopric, eleven scattered entries, covering the period from 1005 to 1070, were there made in this manuscript. They consist, in the main, of matters pertaining to Canterbury. The last refers to the new primate and his dispute with the archbishop Thomas of York. Then ensues a silence

until long after Lanfranc's death, when a writer appears who, in a connected narrative and in Latin, treats of the time of Lanfranc's primacy. Ecclesiastical affairs are especially considered, and time is computed according to the number of years elapsed since the archbishop's ordination. The record closes with a mention of the election and consecration of Anselm.

The national annals fared better in Worcester. The archiepiscopal seat there was held, from 1062 until 1095, by that Wulfstan who was accused of illiteracy to William the Conqueror, though unsuccessfully, by Lanfranc, and who certainly possessed neither the classical culture nor the dialectical skill of the Norman prelates. His mind was, however, as acute and well informed as his character was energetic and upright; nor did he in any respect lack interest in scholarship, particularly in history. At his commission the sub-prior Hemming compiled a cartulary of the church of Worcester. The monk Colman, Wulfstan's chaplain, and prior of Westbury by his promotion, wrote, after the death of his patron, his life in English. According to William of Malmesbury, this work, as to matter, was written with serious grace *(lepore gravi)*; as to form, with artless simplicity *(simplicitate rudi)*. The Worcester *Annals* were also continued under Wulfstan. We find an annalist in the last quarter of the twelfth century whose productions have a certain breadth and depth of thought, together with a touch of melancholy, and who is one of the best writers in his sphere. He seems to have been conversant with Wulfstan, and may be identical with Colman, however plain that writer's language might appear to a William of Malmesbury. Our annalist sketches the character of the mighty conqueror whom he saw with his own eyes, as follows:

> King William, of whom we speak, was a very wise and very powerful man, and more stately and strong than any of his predecessors. He was mild toward the good man who loved God, but beyond measure severe toward those who opposed his will. . . He made earls prisoners who acted against his will. Bishops he put out of their bishoprics, and abbots out of their abbacies, and he cast thegns into prison, and at last he spared not his own brother Odo. . . Among other things is not to be forgotten the good peace which he made in this land, so that a man who himself took heed might travel through his kingdom

unharmed with his bosom full of gold; and no man dared slay another, though he had done never so much evil against him. . .[1]

The work of this Worcester annalist is preserved to us in a compilation made at Peterborough. This extant Worcester recension extends only to the year 1079.

In the year 1116 a conflagration destroyed the minster at Peterborough, with nearly all the adjacent buildings, and certainly the greater part of the existing books and records. This gave occasion as well for the building of a new minster as for the drawing up of a new set of annals. The work seems to have been started about the year 1121. The greatest care and pains were taken, certainly less in the interest of historical truth than of the monastery, things which fortunately did not always clash. Various authorities were used; as the *Annals* of Winchester and Abingdon, and for the later period particularly, those of Worcester, whence a revision reaching to the year 1107 seems to have been received. Local knowledge was also used, and a number of false records were skilfully interpolated, which were to certify to ancient gifts and privileges conferred upon the abbey. Thus a complete whole was put together, extending to the year 1121. It is entertaining reading; excellent passages of serious interest alternate with edifying, sometimes with idyllic information, as accounts of the weather or crops.

This compilation plainly manifests, on the one hand, a more limited range, narrowed by monasticism, in contrast with the national standing-point of most of the older annalists; on the other hand, it indicates an effort to secure literary effects by the selection of what is attractive in the historical material, a tendency which later constantly spread in Latin historiography. The *Annals* of Peterborough were apparently continued with little interruption from 1122 to 1131. Then, after the lapse of several years (as shown by the more modern cast of the language), the period from 1132 to 1154 was described by a not untalented hand. With the opening of Henry II.'s reign, the thread of the English *Annals* was broken off in this last workshop. Gaimar had already written his history of the Britons and the Angles, and Wace was working at his *Brut*. A Latin chronicle was kept at Peterborough after 1122, and, as in 1117 Florence had mainly

[1] Earle, p. 221, *et seq.*

adopted the substance of the English *Annals* of Worcester in his *Chronicon ex chronicis*, so Hugo Candidus likewise embodied those of Peterborough, though to a less extent, in his *Coenobii Burgensis historia*, which he finished in 1155.

The religious needs of divines and laymen insured the theological literature in the English language against complete extinction. The works of famous homilists of former times were still diligently copied and read. The words were in part modernised by the scribe; obsolete and difficult expressions were replaced by more current phrase. An error sometimes betrays the hand which converted older into more modern characters. But this work was not confined to copying and paraphrasing; there were compilations and imitations, and passages from ancient authors were inserted in later writings. It is not easy, without the help of external criteria, to set apart, in the extant collections of homilies of this epoch, the portions belonging to different minds and times. But there is no doubt that this literature is, in essence, partly a renewal, and partly a reflection of the labours of the tenth and eleventh centuries. It was nourished particularly by the spirit of Aelfric. The homilies of the great abbot were more than once copied, modernised, imitated. Passages relating to the eucharist and opposed to the orthodox doctrine, victoriously defended by Lanfranc, were wont to be erased. Aelfric's potent word, however, reached the people but slightly altered. The Norman preachers had in truth nothing better to offer their hearers.

The translation of the Gospels made in the first half of the eleventh century, also appeared in modernised form, in the course of the twelfth (Hatton *Gospels*); new glosses to the psalter and a new version of the *Rule of St. Benedict* were written. There was indeed some activity in natural science and medicine. A newly prepared illustrated manuscript of the *Herbarium Apuleii* was provided with English glosses. The Old English *Herbarium*, based upon Apuleius and Dioskorides, together with the *Medicina de quadrupedibus*, was modernised, though not without change in the arrangement of matter, and with many omissions and additions. We may perhaps likewise regard the collection of recipes which appeared at this time as a copy or working over of an older English original, and hardly as a direct translation

from Latin sources. From the brief review of the more ancient history of medicine with which it opens, it has received the title *peri didaxeon* (περὶ διδάξεων), *i. e.*, "of the schools," or "of the systems of doctrine."

This entire prose literature of the twelfth century, especially the homiletic, is exceedingly attractive and important to the grammarian.

For we see that the English language in this period underwent a momentous transformation, which was very gradually consummated, yet after the middle of the century, with a somewhat accelerated movement. Many sounds, particularly among the vowels, were modified, the value of unaccented final syllables was weakened, former distinctions were obliterated, and the inflections were becoming deranged. Certain words of the vocabulary came to be rarely used, or disappeared entirely as others took their place. The language was roughened and impoverished.

The influence of Norman rule was more negative than direct in this regard. The language followed its natural course of development. When the national state ceased, the unity of the literary language crumbled; provincial and popular elements invaded it from all sides. Hence, in the literary monuments, which, as we saw, were chiefly the work of the scribe or compiler, the language was chaotic and heterogeneous; ancient forms strove with new ones for precedence, until toward the close of the century, when victory decidedly inclined to the latter.

This language was still entirely Teutonic, both in its structure and component parts. A hardly appreciable number of Romance elements entered its vocabulary (mainly in the second half of the century), and as a rule they did not at once displace the corresponding English vocables. They chiefly concerned, as was to be expected, things and ideas connected with church and cult, with the constitution of the feudal state, the military system, or the external life of a feudal-chivalric society. Words like *castel*, *justise*, *prisun*, on Saxon lips, are to us very significant.

V.

The English popular song had not been silenced under Norman rule; and surely the people did not sing such songs only as that whose beginning the monk of Ely gives us in the history of his church,[1] naming as the poet King Cnut himself:

Merie sungen muneches binnen Ely,
Tha Cnut chyning reu ther by;
Roweth, cnihtes, noer the land,
And here we thes muneches sang.

Merrily sang the monks in Ely, as Cnut the king rowed by; row, knights, near the land, and let us hear the song of these monks—

"With many other words, *quae usque hodie* (in 1166) *in choris publice cantantur et in proverbiis memorantur.*" William of Malmesbury tells us that in his day men sang upon the open street of the marriage of Gunhild, the daughter of Cnut, with the Emperor Henry. Undoubtedly were heard also historical songs of another kind—songs of battle and strife.

The ancient epos hardly survived, yet many a bit of epic saga was transmitted, if in modified form; as, the saga of the ancient epic king of the Angles, Offa, which had been transferred to the great Offa of Mercia. The Middle English poem of Wade, to which Chaucer alludes,—it is unfortunately lost—was, without doubt, based upon traditions, as well as songs, which were surely circulated in the twelfth century, as they had been earlier; for this Wade, as the book ascribed to him attests, was no other than the ancient Wada (old Norse *Vadi*, M. H. G. *Wate*), the father of Weland. The name of Weland the Smith appeared in the poetry of the fourteenth century, and in certain districts it has remained current among the English people far into modern times.

Mythological conceptions were still strong among the people. English writers of the twelfth century related many marvellous things of elves and other supernatural beings, and the fairies of Romance origin were now added to them. The ancient gods also survived, though shorn of much of their greatness, and with new names. It may have been in

[1] Hist. El. II., 27; Gale, p. 505. We have ventured to make two slight changes in the text.

this period, or a little later, that Woden received the name Robin, which is the French popular form for the German Ruprecht; the latter reminds us more vividly of the ancient title of the god, Hruodperaht (*i. e.*, splendid in fame). Robin Goodfellow corresponds to the German *Knecht Ruprecht.* But in the saga of Robin Hood, the ancient conception of the wild huntsman (likewise connected with Woden) seems to have been transferred from heaven to earth, thus receiving the more prosaic earthly form of a bold poacher and outlaw.

Such outlaws were at all times favourite popular heroes, but this was especially true in the Norman period, when (at the beginning at least) a sort of national, and even patriotic, feeling was mingled with the sympathetic admiration for them, and when the terrible severity of the game laws drew down the bitterest hatred upon those who had to see them executed. The poetic fancy, therefore, early took possession of the history of such heroes.

The Latin account of the deeds of Hereward the Saxon, who, with a few followers, defied the power of the conqueror in the marshes of Ely, contains, beyond all question, both truth and poetry, and it arose, to judge from appearances, in the first part of the twelfth century. It may here be noted that the author of the *Gesta Herewardi Saxonis* mentions, as one of his authorities, the history of Hereward's youth from the pen of Leofric of Brun, a priest in Hereward's service. He says that this Leofric had endeavoured to become acquainted with the deeds of the giants and warriors from ancient tales *(fabulis)*, or from trustworthy statements, and to record them, which he seems to have done in the English language.[1]

At a later time, Norman barons also were proscribed, as in the case of Fulke Fitz Warin, under King John. He was celebrated in an Anglo-Norman poem which has come to us in a prose recast; there was besides an imitation in English verse.

Among the sagas current in the twelfth century are some which extend to the Old English period, but in substance they have no connection with the subject-matter of the

[1] The expression *ob memoriam Angliae literis commendare* (*Chroniques anglo-normandes*, II. 2) is peculiar and ambiguous.

ancient epos. Their historical background is formed by the inroads and settlement of the Danes, and the relations between England and Denmark growing out of them. Hence they may have been chiefly native to eastern England. They reached a fair degree of completeness, in part in the eleventh, in part perhaps not before the twelfth century; but they were still quite susceptible of new growths and transformations. They were evidently a favourite theme of the English glee-men, who never lacked willing hearers among the people, although deeply degraded from their former position, and eclipsed by foreign *jongleurs* and *menestrels*. Even Norman poets did not disdain to handle such material, more or less closely following their English models; and their method of treatment was not without influence upon the form given to these sagas by the national poesy. The course of development of this glee-men's poetry was determined still more decisively by the manners of the time, now being transformed by Norman-French influence, and by the new views and ideas that filled the air.

This influence is plainly evident in the saga of *Horn*, which, although possibly of somewhat older origin, did not receive the form in which it has come to us until a later day; whereas, the saga of *Havelok*, as we must conclude from Gaimar's account, was definitely settled in its main outlines as early as the beginning of the twelfth century. Both sagas have to do with a king's son, who either flees or is driven over the sea to a foreign land; he tarries there many years, and, after numerous adventures, reconquers his kingdom and takes revenge on his enemies. A princess next appears in both sagas, the bride or spouse of the hero; but while the passion of love virtually plays no part in *Havelok*, it forms in *Horn* the very centre of interest. In *Havelok* the geographical, if not the historical, points of union with fact are clearly defined. The *Horn-saga* is inextricably confused in both these respects.

Both sagas emerged in English poetry soon after the middle of the thirteenth century.

The sagas of *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton*, less primitive, seem to have sprung from a combination of local traditions, historical reminiscences, current fabulous and romantic themes, and pure invention. They were first treated by Anglo-Norman poets, and after them, in English verse.

The saga of *Waltheof* may take an intermediate position. We readily discern in its contents, taking into account the name of the hero, the historical nucleus, however distorted it may be. The English poem on *Waltheof* is lost; the French romance of *Waldef*, which is said to be an imitation of it, has not yet been published, and was, until a short time ago, practically inaccessible. There is, however, a Latin prose translation[1] dating from the beginning of the fifteenth century, whose author was John Bramis, a monk of Thetford near Ely, and who seems for a part to have used the English original; for the rest, the French text.

Many a memory from the more ancient period of its history may still have been living among the English people in the twelfth century. But above all shone forth the image of King Aelfred, that had descended from father to son as a precious heirloom. Single features had been impaired, and some new traits added, but in the main it was like the original: the ruler who loved his subjects as did no other, the man of power and gentleness, who was at once king, father, and teacher of his people.

From this latter office, Aelfred came gradually to be regarded as a source of popular wisdom. A number of proverbs and maxims were ascribed to him.

There existed, in the twelfth century, collections of gnomic poems with the title *Proverbs* (*Parabolæ*) or *Precepts* (*Documenta*) *of Aelfred*. These were given to posterity in several versions, varying in compass, arrangement, and, partly, in contents.

A few recensions from the thirteenth century are preserved; the existence of others is proved by citations in a contemporary poem. Three distinct parts have recently been pointed out in the more complete text; though it is still doubtful if they really owe their origin to three different epochs, since ancient and modern matters are intermingled within the compass of shorter sections.

The opening of the poem shows King Aelfred seated in solemn assembly, surrounded by the great men of his realm:

At Seaford sat many thegns, many bishops, and many book-learned men, proud earls, warlike knights. There was the eorl Alfrich, who

[1] See on this subject Wright, *Essays on Subjects connected with the Literature etc. of England in the Middle Ages*, II., 97, *et seq.*

was very learned in the law, and also Alfred, the shepherd of the Angles, the Angles' darling, in England he was king. Them he began to teach, as ye may hear, how they their life should lead. Alfred was a very strong king in England. He was king and he was clerk, well he loved God's work. He was wise in word and prudent in works. He was the wisest man in England.

Then follow the admonitions and proverbs in sections, each of which begins with the words: *þus queþ Alured* (*þus quad Alfred*). Piety, wisdom, justice, diligence, the transitoriness of life, the vanity of earthly possessions, such are the topics treated. More specific precepts for special emergencies and rules of worldly wisdom are added to these; prudence in the choice of a wife and shrewd management of the spouse are very urgently enjoined.

Thus quoth Alfred: be never so mad nor so drunk with wine, as to say all thy will to thy wife. For should she see thee before all thy foes, and thou hadst angered her with words, she would not refrain for any living thing from upbraiding thee with thy times of adversity. Woman is word-mad and hath a too swift tongue. If she would, she cannot rule it.[1]

The metrical form in which these proverbs of Aelfred are clothed is of moment. In them we find the ancient long line in the midst of its transformation into the short couplet. Alliteration, imperfectly carried out and often too lavishly employed, alternates with, or accompanies rhyme, which, like the alliteration, connects the two halves of a long line.[2] But the rhyme falls upon the final syllables of the members of the line which it binds; further, unlike the alliteration, it can make no difference between the first and second half-line; hence it makes us feel—as we have already pointed out—that what it joins is dual, is a pair. The following seems clearly a unit:

*wi*t and *wi*sdom—and i*w*riten rede,

and in spite of the massing of alliteration, the following is also felt to be a unit:

He wes *wi*s on his *w*ord—and *w*ar on his *w*erke.

But in the line,

He wes king and he wes *clerk*—well he luuede godes *werk*

[1] *Proverbs of Alfred*, No. 17; in Kemble, *Dialogue of Salomon and Saturnus*, p. 235 *et seq.*

[2] As a matter of course, the rhyme is more consistently used, the alliteration more deranged, in some proverbs than in others. The former are not necessarily older than the latter on this account.

we perceive a rhyming couplet, and the alliteration, confined to the short line (*k*ing, *c*lerk—*w*el, *w*erk) seems merely an ornament.

We noted the same or similar peculiarities of form in a few poems of the eleventh century, especially in the song on *Aetheling Aelfred* (for the year 1036). If we place later products side by side with them, we are compelled to conclude that the popular poetry of the twelfth century, so far as it was original, ranged chiefly within such forms as these.

VI.

Rhyme soon came into use also in strictly religious poetry, to which the *Proverbs* of Aelfred can hardly be said to belong. The ancient long line, it is true, seems to have been longer retained intact in this poetry. We have from the twelfth century two poetical speeches of the soul to the body, one of which is almost exclusively written in alliteration, although this is oftentimes not employed in strict accordance with the rule.

On the other hand, the ecclesiastical poets began early to make use of quite new forms, taken from foreign models; forms which, in spite of probable ancient relationship, differ more radically from the indigenous forms than may appear at a superficial view. For in them lives the rhythm of a foreign language which now began to affect the English.

These new rhythms appeared first in the south of England, from which fact, however, no hasty inferences must be drawn.

In the district lying between the Avon and the Stour, where join the boundaries of three counties, Dorset, Wilts, and Hants, originated, perhaps as early as the reign of Henry I., the poem known in the history of literature as the *Poema morale*. It is a sermon in verse, but it rises above the level of its class, by a greater freedom of movement and by the admixture of a subjective, even lyrical element.

The preacher begins by alluding with melancholy to his advanced age, to his life that has sped without his having much profited from it:

I am now older than I was, in winters and in lore,
I wield more power than I did: were but my wisdom more.
Too long have I been like a child in word and eke in deed;
Yet, though I am in winters old, too young am I in heed.
Methinks my life a useless one, like to the one I've led;
And when I ponder on it well, full sorely I dread,
For almost all that I have done befits unto childhood,
And very late have me bethought, unless God helps to good.
I've spoken many idle words since I to speak was able,
Full many deeds I've done that now seem most unprofitable.
And almost all that I once liked is hateful now to me:
Who follows overmuch his will, himself deceiveth he.
I might in truth have better done had my ill-luck been less;
Now that I would, I can no more for age and helplessness.
Old Age his foot-step on me stole ere I his coming wist:
I could not see before me for the dark smoke and the mist.
Laggards we are in doing good, in evil all too bold;
Men stand in greater fear of man than of the Christ of old.
Who doth not well the while he may, repenting oft shall rue
The day when men shall mow and reap what they erstwhile did strew.

Thus the poet admonishes every man not to let the time pass away unemployed, but to lay up good works in heaven, to depend upon nobody, but to provide for himself. In heaven our treasure is safely stored, thither we should send what we hold best. Everybody can gain heaven for himself, since God is content with little: He looks at the will. God knows and sees all things. Then what shall we say or do at the last judgment, which even the angels fear? The poet speaks in two places of the last judgment; twice he depicts the torments of hell, drawing from the treasure of mediæval tradition. The description of the souls struggling from the heat to the cold, and from the cold to the heat is very graphic. The frost seems a blessing to them when in the fire, the fire when in the frost. They move restlessly to and fro like water before the wind. "These be they who were inconstant in mind, who made to God promises they did not keep, who began a good work and did not finish it, who now were here, now there, and did not know their own minds." The preacher then proceeds to the means by which we may shield ourselves against hell: the essence of all God's commandments lies in love to Him and to our neighbour. He warns men against the broad road that easily goes down through a dark wood into a barren field, and commends the straight and narrow path that leads to heaven.

He next portrays the bliss of heaven, which does not consist in earthly splendour and in sensual pleasure, but in the sight of God, who is the true sun, full of brightness, the day without night. "To this bliss may God bring us!"

Depth of thought, warmth of sentiment, nobility of feeling, and a spiritual conception of spiritual things,—such qualities show the author of the *Poema morale* to be of the same family with the homilists of the Old English church; but while he moves within their range of ideas, he clothes his thought in a new form.

We easily discern in his verse the iambic *septenarius*, or more exactly, the catalectic tetrameter, well known to antique poetry. The poet sometimes takes the liberty of omitting the up-beat ("*Auftakt*," ἀνάκρουσις) in the first as well as in the second section of the line; but otherwise he observes a very regular alternation of *arsis* and *thesis*. Such a rhythm necessarily involves a treatment of accent at variance with the ancient usage; hence we here for the first time encounter a principle of accentuation which was to leave its impress upon the entire future development of English metre, and was of moment to the language itself, especially as regards unaccented syllables and secondary accents. But the old principle was not put aside suddenly and without a struggle. It lived on for centuries in the native verse. It is, however, very doubtful if, near the close of the Middle Ages, men were able to read the alliterative verse as correctly as they constructed it, in accordance with tradition.

Another innovation, of which the Middle Latin and the French poesy could both furnish models, was the regular employment of an end-rhyme, joining, not the cæsura and close of the same line, but different lines. With our poet two long lines form a strophe, at whose close the sentence usually ends; a minor pause parts the two halves of the strophe.

Not less than rhythm and metre, the poetical language of the *Poema morale* diverges from the ancient manner. How much less does it seem to flow from the fulness of imagination, how abstract and meagre it seems beside the diction of a Cynewulf! But to compensate for this, it is clearer, simpler, and easier; and if the regularly recurring pauses,

made prominent by the rhyme, are somewhat monotonous, especially in connection with the brevity of the strophes and the length of the poem, yet they lend a pleasing finish and increased emphasis to the expression. The plan of the *Poema morale*, regarded either as a homily or as a poem, is not faultless. Hence it is not easy for us to realise the full impression which the poem must have made upon contemporaries, upon devout-minded auditors. That this was considerable is shown as well by the numerous copies extant, as by the influence that it unmistakably exercised upon later poets.

Another writer, the author of a poetical exposition of the *Paternoster*, proved much poorer in ideas, in poetic talent, and metrical skill; he likewise belonged to the south of England, and lived in the second half of the twelfth century. His work is especially noteworthy because it is the oldest known poem in which a short rhyming couplet is consistently and regularly employed. But this is not an early development of the national form occurring in Aelfred's *Proverbs*. The short line, it is true, has in both cases four accents and the couplet eight; but while the sonorous close[1] of the native verse has two accents, or at least is reckoned equivalent to two accents, it numbers, as a rule, but one in the *Paternoster*. Accordingly we find the endings in this poem to be masculine and feminine rhymes in the Romanic sense, and we are reminded of the French short couplet of eight-syllabled lines, which, it may be taken for granted, is, in its turn, based upon a long line of eight accents, the iambic tetrameter.

VII.

While the English poesy was attempting new forms, and did not in spirit and subject-matter yet betray the influence of foreign art, the Romanic poetry was in the midst of a powerful development. But by this time England was united by new bonds with the Romanic world. Indeed such parts of this world as had formerly been remote now became connected with her, and especially those territories in which poetry had taken a new and peculiar impulse.

[1] *I. e.*, a double ending in which the first or accented syllable is long.

Henry, Count of Anjou and Maine, Duke of Normandy and lord of Britanny, had, by his marriage with Eleanor of Poitou (1152), become Count of Poitou and Duke of Aquitaine. After 1154 he also wore the English crown. The king of England thus had sway over the entire western part of France, a dominion twice as large as that ruled by his liege-lord, the king of France. In the vast empire of the Plantagenets, races speaking French and Provençal, Teutonic and Celtic idioms came into closer contact, and this in an epoch of rapidly advancing culture and general intellectual activity, when the crusades brought European nations into intercourse with each other and with the oriental peoples. The court gathered about Henry II. formed the centre where the various currents of culture that traversed this wide territory met and formed new combinations.

It was between 1152 and 1156, in Normandy, that the seductive Eleanor of Poitou received the enthusiastic homage of a young poet of southern France, without rank and without name, save that which he had made himself by his songs; this poet followed her to England. It was the famous troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn, with whom the South French, or as it is usually called, the Provençal, art-poesy entered upon the period of its florescence. The beginnings of this new class of poetry date from the eleventh century. At the head of the series of troubadours known to us stands an ancestor of Eleanor, beautiful, spiritual, captivating, and frivolous like his granddaughter, a brilliant, chivalric personage, William of Poitiers, Count of Poitou and Duke of Aquitaine (1071–1127).

Southern France was a land marvellously favoured by nature, pervaded by ancient culture, and opened by the Mediterranean to intercourse with Italy, Greece, and the Orient; a more refined enjoyment of life had earlier than elsewhere sprung up as a consequence of increased prosperity and produced, in its turn, finer manners and culture. The nobility was early distinct from the people, not alone because of greater power, wealth, and splendid living, but also through a certain elegance of forms, through an intellectual culture not entirely lacking scholarship, but essentially that of the man of the world. If the masculine side of chivalry, the *prouesse*, appeared in full vigour for the first time among the Normans,

we first find its feminine side, the *courtoisie*, among the Provençals. Reverence for woman formed the centre of the courtly chivalry unfolding in the south of France, which, as ever is the case in privileged, exclusive classes, especially in epochs of growing culture, soon received an extremely conventional tone. Love was, therefore, the key-note to the poesy which developed in the circles of the South-French nobility, and which, destined to express individual feelings and to serve personal ends, from the first was extremely subjective, but at the same time was strongly influenced by prevailing customs.

So for the first time in the occidental literature of the Middle Ages sprang up a poetry truly erotic and lyrical in spirit and conception, and eminently artistic in its form.

That love which, from the first, was the topic of the troubadour, and continued to be the soul of his song, even after quite different themes had been introduced, was of a very mixed character. It was oftentimes broadly sensual, sometimes frivolous. Its object was usually a married woman, as the young maidens were wont to be held in monastic seclusion. Thus arose for the lover the difficulty in approaching his beloved; or, in case she was the spouse of the lord, there was also the danger connected with his wooing, the deeper reverence with which he looked up to the mistress of his heart. Hence the custom of giving the lady-love an assumed name, and the obscure allusions of which these poems are full; hence the enhanced duty of silence when a suitor won the favour of his love. Hence, too, the soft, ardent, gushing sentiment which found early and ever stronger expression in this poesy, the sentiment to which the slightest token of favour from the mistress was paramount to everything, to which her aspect itself yielded high delight, nay, which was happy in mere pensive musing. This love was therefore not entirely without ideality, which did not, indeed, with many poets, rise above conventionality, but with others came from the deepest feeling. And does not the custom itself which makes the gentle sex the object of respectful devotion, and grants to it sovereignty and precedence, rest upon an ideal basis?—since it cannot adequately be accounted for without the influence of Christianity (and we may add, of the Teutonic spirit); the cult of the Virgin Mary forms the begin-

ning of the extravagant devotion to woman. And if a gallant troubadour, reversing the ancient relation, calls the love of a married man for other women a "false, bad love," but finds nothing to say against the love of wedded women when directed to a worthy object, this may, in one respect, seem rather questionable, it may even be deemed "morbid"; yet it betokens the spirit of an age in which there had been a great refining of the feelings as a natural reaction against the rude arrogance of force.

Technically, the poesy of the troubadours was, as a matter of course, constructed upon the basis of popular poetry; but it strove, from the first, in accordance with the social atmosphere in which it flourished, to mould itself in artistic and individual forms. It was upon the invention of new strophic forms and melodies—for his songs were sung—that the poet mainly founded his claim to the title troubadour *(trobaire, trobador) i. e.*, finder, as opposed to the *jongleur (joglar)*, who recited the songs of others or handed down the tradition of popular poetry.

Rhyme took the place of assonance; it no longer merely tied successive verses, but as an alternating or inserted rhyme, glided pleasingly through the strophe, or even the entire poem, often falling within the verse, or uniting the close of a line with the beginning of the next, or perhaps in each strophe changing its position in artistic order. Various metres were gradually employed in the service of song; the strophe was oftentimes constructed out of different rhythms, which a fine ear combined into a musical whole. Moreover, there was gradually formed a technical classification of the lyrical divisions, which received special names, determined partly by the subject-matter and partly by the form. Thus we have the *vers* to designate the simpler song-form of the older troubadours; the *chanso*, for the artistically developed love-song; the *sirventes* (service-poem), for the political or moral song, composed in the service of a lord, which also included as subdivisions the crusader's song and the elegy *(planh)*; the *tenso*, or *joc partit* (dispute, divided play), in which two poets, alternating by strophes, defend and oppose some proposition. Other classes followed these in order, containing epic and in part dramatic matter, and, in spite of the artistic cultivation they received, concealing their popular origin less

than the *vers*, viz: the romance, in which the poet relates an experience or an adventure of his own; the pastoral *(pastorela)*, which presents him in gallant discourse with a shepherdess; the morning-song *(alba)*, which depicts the parting of two lovers at dawn; the dancing-song, in various forms, and others. In the course of time arose a tendency to classify still more minutely, as regards form and matter. Of these subdivisions the *descort* deserves mention, since, contrary to the usual manner of art-poesy, it was constructed of unequal strophes, like the church sequences with which it was connected, and like the North-French *lai*.

In such forms and classes was cast this lyrical poesy of Provence. It generally lacked plastic individualisation, and often directness; it was fond of a scholastic analysis of the feelings, of abstractions, and generalisations, and it was apt, especially in the love-song, to fall into conventional monotony; but, nevertheless, it often rouses our admiration by its technical finish and euphonious language, by the ingenious manner in which the same theme is presented with ever new variation, by its refinement and delicacy, and often by its boldness of thought; and it not rarely receives from the power of its passion or the depth of its feeling a warmly pulsing life, which irresistibly bears us with it. The construction is with most poets simple and lucid. But the sense is oftentimes obscured when the writer, either from caution or to gain artistic distinction, purposely clothes his thoughts in vague, peculiar phrase, and seeks rare words and difficult rhymes to which the language, with its mass of ambiguous vocables, lent itself only too readily. Detailed similes are not rare with the troubadours, though they are at times far-fetched. Besides what life and nature afford to experience, reminiscences from classical mythology, mediæval heroes of romance, and personages from the *Physiologus* serve for comparison.

As has already been remarked, princes and nobles first cultivated the new art, and so long as it flourished, there was no lack of poets from the nobility. But very soon the lowly born worked their way into courtly customs, and a courtly manner of writing; and it was precisely this class that contained troubadours able to strike the fullest note of genuine feeling. In the course of time ecclesiastics and

monks also appeared in the ranks of the art- and love-poets, at which we can hardly wonder as occurring in the Middle Ages.

The most ancient troubadour of whom we know, Guilhem de Poitiers, employs comparatively simple forms. Besides the canzone *(chanso)*, he is also partial to more popular kinds of verse, as the "*vers*," and the "romance," the latter having a frivolous and even lascivious tone. His songs are, for the most part, fresh, audacious, and self-conscious; he does not conceal his pride in his own personal qualities, or in his art. Even when he appears as a languishing lover, he cannot always suppress a humorous feeling arising from his sense of superiority. One of his songs is especially tender; that in which, in the phrase of a great connoisseur in this branch of literature, "the chief traits of the minne-poesy, which later unfolded completely, lie together as in the bud."

We give a few strophes from it that we may hear the new chord then sounding in the poetry of the West:

Each joy must bow before her throne,
All might obey, in every place,
For my sweet lady's kindly grace
And lovesome glance. He that would own
Her love's deep bliss, would taste alone,
Must live a hundred years' full space. . . .

Since none more gentle can be found,
Nor named with mouth, nor with eye seen,
I'll keep her for myself, my queen.
My heart within, refreshed, shall bound,
With youth my body be recrowned,
And I shall ne'er grow old, I ween.

If but my lady will give her love
To me, with thankful heart I will
It take, and keep her secret still;
Enhance her praise; her worth above
All others set; both speak and move
As doth her pleasure best fulfil.

No word I risk to send her, lest
She angry be. Myself, I dare
Not speak,—Alas, to fail! I fear
My love too strongly be expressed!
Yet she should choose all for my best,
Knowing my cure lies in her care.

Guilhem was followed by a non-noble bard, Cercalmon, in whose songs there is the ring of a softer note. Soon after him came Marcabru, a foundling who worked his way up to the rank of a troubadour by sheer strength of mind. He was a man of peculiar, though completely rounded views of life, and of great parts; he had a strong bent toward the didactic, and he sharply scourged the moral defects of his time. He exhorted men to the crusades with burning words; but at another time, with deepest feeling he portrayed in a "romance" a forsaken maiden as a sacrifice to the crusades. All his art is full of popular notes, notwithstanding his partiality for rare and obscure words. Jaufre Rudel, the Prince of Blaya, wrote at about the same time, perhaps somewhat earlier. His romantic history, known from Uhland's ballad, accords well with the deep yearning expressed in his songs.

The canzone reached its full artistic perfection in Bernart de Ventadorn, our point of departure. In *technique* it probably owed to him the gain of the epic ten-syllabled line, whose cæsura Bernart modified for lyrical purposes,—and hence it received a broader flow and more majestic strain. As to matter, it owes still more to him. Beyond all other troubadours, Bernart can move us by the deep feeling which speaks to the heart. This he clothes in artistic, sometimes rich, but never overcharged, metrical forms, in chastely noble language, and often with childlike *naïveté*.

We find, after Bernart's time, frequent allusions in the lyrical poetry of Provence to the Plantagenets and to affairs of their realm. Many troubadours had close relations with the English court; some even took active part in politics. In this connection we are at once reminded of Bertran de Born, that restless, combative lord of Autafort, who gave Henry II. so much trouble, who incited now the barons of Aquitaine against their liege-lord, now the sons against their father. Bertran brought the political *sirventes* to its highest perfection. His songs give utterance to passion, life, energy, which, joined to finished mastery of form, move us with kindling, startling power.

One of the Plantagenets, Richard Cœur de Lion, himself appeared in the ranks of the troubadours with the title "the Count of Poitiers," though one of the two songs that we

possess from him has come to us also in French, and though perhaps both were written by him in this language.

At about the time when Bernart de Ventadorn came to Eleanor's court, the Provençal poetry began powerfully to tell upon that of northern France. Proximity and the similarity of languages made unavoidable what was notably promoted by complicated dynastic and territorial relations, and the roving impulse of many poets and singers.

A lyrical poetry had already begun in northern France to form upon a popular basis and in a more popular spirit, and it was now quickly brought by its advanced Provençal sister to a higher finish of form and a tone of courtly refinement. The French poetry acquired a love-song and *jeu parti*, which, in form and matter, are repetitions—generally weak ones—of the Provençal models. But the *sirventes* did not grow to an independent class in the North; what was understood by the *sirventois* rather corresponds to the religious song. Of the sub-classes of the Provençal *sirventes*, only the crusader's song is more fully represented in French territory; as indeed the religious song in general, which sings the love of God with the fervour and tenderness of earthly love, was there more developed.

The French lyric was original and significant chiefly when it rested upon its own folk-poesy, in the *lai*, the romance, the pastoral. There it far surpassed the Provençal poetry in freshness of execution, in depth of feeling, or in naïve archness and wit. The Provençals had nothing to compare with the *chanson d'histoire*, which nearly corresponds to the ballad; and in this the song-form that preceded the origin of the epos is applied to romantic, instead of national subjects; the structure of its strophe is limited by art, and, soon adorned with pure rhymes, it for a time accompanies the epos in its growth.

As among the troubadours, we also meet with noble poets among the lyrical *trouvères*, like the châtelain of Coucy, like Quesnes of Bethune and even princes, like the Duke of Brabant, and the famous Thibaut of Champagne, king of Navarre. But, from the first, men of meaner descent took part in the new art, as did Crestien de Troyes in Champagne. Especially in Flanders, in Artois, in Picardy, did the commons take strong hold upon the development of the art-lyric.

The court-lyric seems to have been mainly cultivated in the north and east of the French-speaking territory, and much less so in the west, in Normandy.

In Anglo-Norman England, the nobility became acquainted with the Provençal, as well as the North-French love-poetry, but the English soil was little adapted to an independent production of this kind. An art which, using the materials of the French language, sought above all a courtly tone and a courtly form could even then freely flourish only where Paris was regarded as the real centre. As early as the second half of the twelfth century, French art-poets begin to show a consciousness that the idiom of the Isle de France was the only proper court-language. At the same time the Norman dialect in England, which, like the Norman dialect of the Continent, was more than half a century behind the French in development, began to degenerate in consequence of the confusion of original vowel shadings. Anglo-Norman versification also was losing its Romanic purity and smoothness under the influence of the English.

No school of lyrical art arose in England. Compositions there in the lyric strain probably seldom attained the courtly finish. The chief production apparently lay in religious lyrical verse. We also find in the thirteenth century political songs in the Anglo-Norman tongue, which, however, are anything but courtly.

Notwithstanding the meagre participation of England in the French love-poetry, the latter scattered many germs there that were of moment in the later development of the national lyrical poetry. Working through the most various channels, it affected the manners and ideas of society, and thus indirectly the literature of the country. Hence it has been requisite to consider it at length and in its origin. The court-epic of the French had indeed a stronger and more direct bearing upon English poetry, and, in its turn, it owed much to Anglo-Norman England.

VIII.

The court-epos, or more appropriately the court-romance, grew up under the influence of the lyrical art-poetry, partly from scholarly and partly from more popular elements.

Especially characteristic of this class, as distinguished from the national epos, is, first, the subject-matter derived from foreign countries. It was drawn from Alexandria, from Byzantium, from Italy, in all these cases through the Latin; or from Wales, Cornwall, Britanny, either through Breton songs and French imitations of them, or through the medium of Latin and French prose versions, full of arbitrary and deliberate invention. It is easy to understand that an epic which aimed to amuse a select class should be at pains to secure new and far-fetched subject-matter, that was mainly crowded with remarkable adventures and marvels, and presented manners and ideas responding to the taste of a more refined age.

The saga of Alexander first found access to western literature. It belongs essentially to antiquity. Alexandria, in its cosmopolitan life, did not ill express the world-embracing ideas of its great founder, and there the saga seems chiefly to have been formed, and there, about the beginning of the third century,[1] it seems to have crystallised in the Greek narrative known by the name *Callisthenes*. The work of the pseudo-Callisthenes was in time circulated in the West in several Latin versions, which were generally based upon various recensions of the original text. Among these, two are conspicuous: that of Julius Valerius for its age; that of the Neapolitan arch-presbyter, Leo, who wrote in the tenth century, for its intrinsic importance.

Before the Norman Conquest we saw a letter translated into English, in which Alexander sent home an account of the marvels he had seen and experienced in India. Several such letters are inserted in the pseudo-*Callisthenes*, the epistolary form being perhaps the most ancient embodiment of the saga. The entire work of the arch-presbyter Leo was poetically rendered by Alberic of Besançon, in the second half of the eleventh century. We possess in the original only the opening of his simple, noble, life-like narrative; while the whole has come to us in the German imitation by the priest Lamprecht (about 1125). Other French Alexander-poems followed. The most famous came in the second half of the twelfth century from the pen of a monk of Cha-

[1] As will be readily understood, my estimate as to the time when the pseudo-*Callisthenes* originated refers only to its most ancient cast as a whole, and not to the single parts. Some of these date from a considerably earlier period.

teaudun, Lambert the Crooked; to this poem the twelve-syllabled line seems to owe the name of Alexandrine. It found a translator and reviser in Alexander de Paris of Bernay, whose work can now scarcely be distinguished from that of Lambert. Drawn from a less pure source, written with less simple grandeur than Alberic's poem, this Alexander-romance presents nevertheless the exalted image of the great man—in whom the Middle Ages found nothing to censure save that he was not a Christian—in a light clear enough to justify the poet who holds up this image as a standard, not only for kings, but also for knights, ecclesiastics, matrons, and maidens. The rendering is rich in fine details and descriptions, and aphorisms are not wanting, which leave a lasting impression upon the memory, comprised as they are, in the true French manner, within the compass of a line, and often pointed with antithesis. Lambert rightly chose the epic strain for his poetry, although it never occurred to him, as to more modern scholars, to name his romance a song. The figure of the hero, the saga itself, are too grand for the form of the courtly narrative. In the former, the Middle Ages could see the model of a king, of a man, of a knight; in the latter, the outlines at least of the grand reality are yet to be discerned. This is especially true of the heroics of the first part, and also, in some degree, of the fabulous second part, although it was here, in the description of Alexander's expeditions in the far East, that an exuberant oriental imagination came into play, and fell into extravagant vagaries.

Among the sagas of classical antiquity belonging essentially to poetry, the story of Æneas was accessible in Virgil, that of Thebes in Statius, both familiar and favourite poets in the Middle Ages. Virgil's *Æneid* had an imitator comparatively early, I conjecture, in the sixties of the twelfth century. He was gifted with great talent, but he took a too independent attitude toward his classical author, and turned his finely proportioned epos into a prolix romance of chivalry, tricked out with all sorts of mediæval courtly detail, but otherwise vividly written.[1]

[1] We are acquainted as yet only with fragments of this French Æneas-romance—this time not by an unlucky chance, but through the fault of scholars. This is so much the more to be regretted, because the poem may have had a similar, if not an equally great influence in the perfecting of the court-epic in France, as did the

On the contrary, the story of Troy, with which that of Æneas is connected, flowed down to that age only from very turbid sources. If Homer was then not absolutely inaccessible to the West, so much is certain: that among the thousands who named his name, there was scarcely one who had a suspicion of his place in literature, and that the most classically educated poets of the twelfth century, as Joseph of Exeter, drew their material, not from him, but from those turbid sources.

Two Latin prose versions of the Troy-saga were then most conspicuous: one with full details, the other brief. Both were professedly translated from the Greek, and the name of an author so well known as Cornelius Nepos is attached to the shorter. Each claims to have been originally composed by one contemporary with the Trojan war, and who took part in it; the longer work, by the Cretan Dictys, who fought upon the Greek side; the shorter by the Phrygian Dares, who fought upon the side of the Trojans.

It is not impossible[1] that the *Ephemeris belli Troiani* of the pseudo-Dictys, which, in its present form, may be placed near the beginning of the fifth century, was really founded upon a Greek original. However distorted, the saga, as here given, much more resembles the ancient tradition than does the narrative of Dares. The author drew from good sources, from Homer, from the cyclic poets, and especially from the tragic writers of Greek antiquity. But the real poetry of the subject vanished in his hands, the saga was robbed of its mythical value, and the epic machinery was discarded.

Bad as he was, Dictys was too good for the Middle Ages, and I do not speak as an enemy of the "Dark Ages." At least his rival Dares was preferred to him, though he was well known and occasionally utilised.

Two circumstances seem to have made Dares attractive to that age: his epitomising, by which his matter could readily be adapted, and then adorned and expanded at will; further, his identification with that people to which medi-

romance of Heinrich of Veldeke, patterned after it, upon the same art-class in Germany (in and after 1175). It is to be hoped that we will soon have a complete publication of the original.

[1] Although, it must be added, in the light of recent investigations of the subject, highly improbable.

æval nations were fond of ascribing their origin, as proud Roma had done before them.

Dares's writing, *De excidio Troiae historia*, is a wretched, barren, often self-contradictory piece of work, written in the worst of Latin; it dates from about the sixth century of our era. But with interest we discern in it the first outlines of personages who were richly developed in mediæval poesy, and were to be moulded still further by Shakspere himself. Troilus is hardly mentioned in older traditions, and in Dictys he merely enters the scene to be killed by Achilles and mourned by the Trojans; but with Dares he plays an important rôle among the sons of Priam. After Hector's death he comes decidedly into the foreground. Calchas, by birth, belongs to the Trojan side, and goes over to the Greek camp only at the direction of the Delphic oracle.

This story of Dares was the source of two poetical Troy-books, composed during the second half of the twelfth century. One of them was written in Latin verses in 1188, by the Englishman Joseph of Exeter; it is particularly interesting as regards form, since its diction for that age was highly cultivated and even brilliant. The other, of somewhat earlier origin, is very important in the growth of the saga; it is the French *Roman de Troie*.

The poet Benoit de Sainte More most probably belonged to the western part of northern France under the Angevin sceptre. Besides Dares, his authorities were Dictys and other writers in part unknown. How far the new matter presented by him came from his own invention and combination cannot be determined with certainty. The details, the externals, the mediæval courtly colouring of the whole, are without doubt his own; for the rest we are confined to conjecture. To generalise, Benoit presents not only the elements, or the impulse, of the mediæval tale of Troilus as we find them in Dares, but its essential outlines are also discernible. Briseida (for Briseis), of whom Dares[1] furnished an attractive portrait, but nothing more, with him becomes the heroine of a fine and carefully executed episode. The beloved of Troilus and the daughter of Calchas, she has remained in Troy. After the capture of Antenor, Calchas proposes to the Greeks to exchange the latter for his daughter. The proposition is ap-

[1] At the close of the thirteenth chapter, which likewise contains the portraits of the Greek princes; as does the preceding those of the Trojans and the Trojan women.

proved and is ratified in Troy. Briseida is to be given back to her father. The great pain and sad parting of the two lovers, who swear eternal fidelity to each other, is then described. But Briseida soon forgets her pain and her love in the wooing of a new lover, Diomedes.[1]

Benoit's poem suffers from too great length and breadth. He likes to begin *ab ovo;* to add learned geographical, ethnographical, mythological digressions, to describe at length, and to make as many words as possible. Yet we cannot deny a certain charm to his style, and to many passages, true poetry. Benoit was a sensitive, somewhat finely organised nature, not lacking imagination, and with either too much or too little learning, whence comes a touch of pedantry. He stood, in other respects, entirely within the influence of the age of chivalric courtliness and its poetry, and he surpassed most of his fellow-writers, both in their virtues and their faults.

We are wont to include the sagas of Alexander, of Troy, of Æneas, of Thebes, and whatever else came from the ancient history or epic, in the comprehensive phrase, the antique saga-cycle. The Middle Ages likewise conceived of them as homogeneous and connected, and contrasted the romances treating them with the *contes d'aventures*.

The romance of adventure was the true field for original invention, that is, an invention producing new combinations out of well-known elements, and often making free with time, place, and names of persons; and this, whether the invention belonged mainly to one person, or equally to many, whether it sprang from the fancy of the French poets, or was transmitted to them, whether, finally, the elements from which it created new combinations flowed to it from art-poetry or the folk-song.

In this connection the elements taken from Late-Greek and Byzantine romances, hold an important place.

The history of *Apollonius of Tyre* very early became known among the western nations through a Latin translation, which must also for us replace the supposed original. As we have seen, it was translated into English before the

[1] This account of the Troilus episode in Benoit is so far inaccurate that, in the *Roman de Troie*, Briseida is not exchanged for Antenor. She is, however, demanded by her father and restored to him in connection with the exchange occasioned by Antenor's capture.

Conquest. In France the story was, in the second half of the twelfth century, connected with the Charlemagne-saga, though very loosely, and with change of names and places; and it was treated in the form of the *chanson de geste* in *Jourdain de Blaivies* at about the same time that Godfrey of Viterbo, in Italy, worked over the story in Latin verse and embodied it in his *Pantheon.*

The crusades brought the western nations into frequent contact with Byzantium, and doubtless procured for them a certain acquaintance with the Late-Greek and Byzantine romance literature. Whether entire works, which would have to be regarded as lost in the original tongue, were translated into the French, traversing perhaps the Latin, whether complete plots were carried by oral tradition into western Europe, or single themes only were thus transplanted, so much is certain, that a not inconsiderable part of the French tales of adventure received their material, or their peculiar colouring, from Byzantium.

In many of them the typical character of their models may be discerned. As to subject-matter, we find a pair of lovers who are pursued or parted, who endure all sorts of adventures, and are happily rescued from ever-recurring perils. The execution shows an absence of all analysis of motives and of all portrayal of character. There is a predominance of chance, an effeminate sentimentality in the treatment of the erotic element, together with detailed descriptions of beautiful gardens, fountains, etc. The favourite romantic apparatus consists of storms, shipwreck, land or sea-robbers, whose place may be taken by merchants trading in human beings, caves in which men hide, and the like.

Late-Greek and oriental elements mingled are unmistakable in the history of *Floris and Blancheflur (Floire et Blancheflor).* Byzantine originals have been claimed (whether correctly we do not say) for other romances, as that of *Partonopeus of Blois*, which employs the beautiful allegorical myth of Amor and Psyche, and that of *Athis and Prophilias.* In Crestien de Troyes's *Cliget* we are led now to the court at Constantinople, now to that of Arthur, and an incident is used which occurs in the Ephesian tales of Xenophon of Ephesus, and then in Chariton's story of *Chæreas and Calirrhoe.* This is the feigning of death by the heroine, the same

motif that reappears in the saga of *Romeo and Juliet*, although it is there made to bring about a tragical conclusion. We can also perceive in *William of Palermo* a certain relationship with Sophistic or Byzantine love-romances. Its plot, in which various elements are blended, may have been elaborated among the Normans in Sicily or southern Italy.

But the Celtic traditions were of paramount importance in the tales of adventure.[1] Several of them were treated in Breton *lais*, and afterwards recited and sung by French *jongleurs*. Then followed the romances, in prose or verse, of art-poets and professional authors. Many foreign elements, oriental and otherwise, were mingled with these sagas in their migration, sometimes naïvely, sometimes with conscious purpose. Since Geoffrey of Monmouth had given the tradition of Arthur a permanent form, it had drawn a mass of other Celtic traditions, sagas, and tales into its magic circle. The names of new Arthurian heroes, besides those well known in Geoffrey, were now added, as well as numerous adventures and exploits ascribed to them. The same tales were in some cases transferred from more ancient to more recent names; thus, Launcelot is made the lover of the queen in Arthurian romance, a rôle filled by Mordred in Geoffrey. Quite independent invention began to act upon the saga-formation as early as Crestien de Troyes, the most ancient poet of the Arthurian romances known to us; the *Cliget*, for instance, looks like an attempt to cater to the interest felt in France concerning Byzantium during the seventies of the twelfth century, by introducing a Byzantine hero into the circle of Arthurian knights, at the same time, as we have seen, employing fictions borrowed from Late-Greek romances.

The Arthurian saga even drew ecclesiastical legends to itself. It did not lack religious moments in Geoffrey of Monmouth, and they sometimes gave a shade of mystery to his narrative. Mysticism first entered the Arthurian cycle in the Graal-saga.

In the second half of the eleventh century, fancy seems to have been often busied with the question, What had become

[1] Some recent scholars do not class the romances of Arthur and Tristan with the *romans d'aventures*—so far rightly as the Middle Ages, to speak with Shakspere, had a "particular addition" in readiness for this group within the class; nevertheless they "go in the catalogue" with the others.

of the chalice, the dish with which Christ had celebrated the Lord's supper? Men's hearts were drawn by a longing desire toward the Holy Land, toward the places where the Saviour had lived and suffered; with their memories and relics. And how could there be a more sacred relic than that cup? It was holier than the cross itself on which Christ had redeemed the world. The dogmatic controversy on transubstantiation between Lanfranc and Berengar turned men's thoughts in the same direction. It is no wonder, therefore, that the poet of the *Charlemagne* makes the great emperor bring the holy cup with him, among other relics. This was, however, only a sign of the time; it formed no starting-point for the development of a legend of the communion-cup.

Nothing was perhaps better adapted to originate such a legend than the history of the man who had taken the body of Christ from the cross and buried it, Joseph of Arimathea. The older church-legend had made him a new witness to the resurrection of Christ; since the Risen One was said to have liberated him from the dungeon into which the Jews had cast him, and to have guided him to his dwelling. It was but natural to make Joseph also a witness to the mystery of transubstantiation. Again, Joseph's imprisonment had been changed, by the mingling of legends and by chronological confusion, from a very brief one into a confinement lasting forty years. Another expedient now took the place of Joseph's liberation by the risen Christ; the Saviour provides the prisoner with food and light, by bringing to him the communion chalice, the Graal, (*i. e.*, dish).

The Graal-saga seems to have been attached in France to the legend of Joseph of Arimathea, and many tokens point to the eastern territory, then belonging to the German empire, the region of the Vosges, as its location.

This was probably also the home of the knight Robert de Boron, who, in the sixties of the twelfth century, wrote his poem on the Graal known by the name *Le petit saint Graal.* It was later put into prose. It has, throughout, the character of a legend, whose centre is the Graal. The personages are Joseph, his brother-in-law Bron, the children of the latter, and their companions. The action lies in the Orient. Near the close, Bron's children go at God's com-

mand to the valleys of Avaron (?) to convert the nations; Bron is to bear the Graal with him to the Occident. There one of his descendants will succeed him in its guardianship, as its last custodian. The idea of a mystical church, beside the visible and official one, seems to underlie the whole; a church having its own apostles and ministers. It would be interesting to examine into the question, how far the dogmatic views of certain sects of that age were here involved.

This legend found fruitful soil in England, where, under Henry II., the tendencies toward ecclesiastical independence were reviving. It was used to prove the origin of the English church as independent of Rome. Joseph, who remains in the Orient in Robert de Boron's version, now comes to England with his son Josephe and other associates; the son is a new and important personage, consecrated a bishop by Christ himself. They convert the land to Christianity; Joseph and his son die and are buried there. This is the legend as given in the prose narrative known by the title *Le grand St. Graal.* The story is otherwise much modified, and has been prolonged by new characters and episodes. The Graal plays an important part, as does the mystery of transubstantiation. There is further a marvellous shield, possessed by Joseph. A martial, chivalric element has in this already united with the religious, and connected the legend with the Arthurian saga. The dynasties founded by the missionaries of Great Britain, who espoused daughters of the native kings, are carried down to Arthur. The Graal is kept in a Northumbrian forest, and there a "pure youth," Galahad, the son of Launcelot, is at last to find it.

Continuing this narrative, another prose romance, *La queste del Saint Graal*, conducts us into the midst of the time and the knightly circle of Arthur. Among all the knights who seek the Graal, Galahad alone succeeds. The Graal, from which Christ himself has come forth and administered the eucharist, is then borne back to the Orient by Galahad, accompanied by Parcival and Bohors. On the death of Galahad it is removed to heaven.

Both of these romances, as well as others, are ascribed, from manuscript notes, to Walter Map, who lived in the reign of Henry II., and who is said to have translated them from the Latin. Whether this is accurate can be decided, if

ever, only when we have a critical edition of these texts, made from the manuscripts, which are evidently much later, and are in no respect Anglo-Norman. But, from internal evidence, there seems no doubt that these romances arose, in substance, in the reign of Henry II.

Crestien de Troyes wrote his *Conte del Graal* in the ninth or tenth decade of the twelfth century. In this the hero is not Galahad, but Parcival, and the chivalric, romantic element comes so far into the foreground that the legend proper is but dimly visible; the Graal is still the remote object of the action, but it no longer forms the central theme of the narrative. Unhappily, Crestien did not finish his poem, and did not reach the point where most of the links connecting it with the legend would have become visible. Those who continued, interpolated, and imitated his work in France, interest us here less than his German interpreter, Wolfram. He completed the narrative, diverging throughout from the legend, and if, as an artist, he did not quite master his fantastic subject-matter, he at least raised it, as a whole, by psychological profundity, and a pervading ideal spirit of true piety and beautiful humanity, into a higher, truly poetical sphere. What new matter he offered must be ascribed either to himself or to the Provençal Kyot, whom he names, but who has otherwise left no traces.

The saga of Tristan takes the first place among the Celtic traditions which continued long independent of the Arthurian saga, and therefore purer. Several of its Old French versions are preserved (the larger, only in fragments), while the Tristan romance of Crestien de Troyes seems to have been entirely lost. The strophic form employed by the *jongleurs* in the recital of their songs has been plainly made out in some passages of ancient Tristan romances. This confirms the theory by which a portion of the court-romances actually rest upon such songs, which in their turn oftentimes presuppose a basis of Breton *lais*. At the same time, we see how the short couplet, which is the standing form of the court-romance, was not only transmitted to it from the legendary, didactic, historical poems, but was also suggested to it by those songs to which it was indebted for its own subject-matter. Other tokens indicate that a short strophe composed of eight-syllabled lines, with single or al-

ternating rhymes, was a favourite form for many subjects in this *jongleur*-poetry. Even the most ancient piece of epic art-poetry in France, the *Alexander* of Alberic de Besançon, is written in tirades of eight-syllabled lines.

The simple form of the short couplet offered to the romance-poet no scope to compete in metrical *technique* with the skilled court-lyrists. He could prove his art only within a limited portion of this field; in the treatment of the *enjambement*, and particularly of rhyme. The poet strove not only to form pure rhymes, but often to carry them forward with more syllables than were essential, and he was fond of all sorts of grammatical devices in rhyme. And with this is connected a tendency most fully developed, it is true, among the epigonic representatives of courtly art, the tendency generally to place words of like sound, or cognate words, close together for the stronger emphasis of the thought.

The diction is but slightly sensuous, and rarely makes use of bold images. Full similes occur, but not so often as in the court-lyric.

The entire language differs from prose mainly in greater elegance, copiousness, and finish. Less severe than the Norman clerical poetry, the French art-epic is not averse to pleasing digression, to a certain freedom in construction, and does not shun the parenthesis. The art of the poets of the court-epic appears in the moderate use of such freedom, which must not impair the clearness of speech, and in the happy conquest of metrical obstacles in such a way that rhyme and measure never retard the free flow of thought, but seem to promote it, smoothing transitions, and more clearly bringing out contrasts.

In the higher sense, this art proves itself in the choice of material; in the rejection of superfluous things; in the invention or skilful insertion of episodes; in the correct arrangement of the different passages of the narrative, whereby the general relation of parts is made evident at a glance; in the happy gradation of themes, whereby interest is enhanced; and finally, in the psychological deduction of action from character.

Again, the age required of the epic poet as vivid a representation of chivalric life and the chivalric ideal as he could give. Hence we have the full description of battles, festivals,

love-scenes, weapons, dress; hence the dialogue, worked out with special care, treating questions of knightly honour and love, of *prouesse* and *courtoisie;* now by subtle irony bringing back to us an age that strove to excel by intellectual superiority as well as by external accomplishments; now, in a quick exchange of repartees, attesting the fecundity and mental alertness of the epoch.

The epic poet is fond of interrupting his narrative by ethical and psychological reflections, in which he makes a fine, and often an acute, analysis of feelings.

We may expect a comprehensive unity of action only when it comes to the poet with his material. With a mass of disconnected adventures before him, he is content to give motive and significance to the deeds of his main heroes, to take care that our interest in their destinies shall not flag, but, if possible, be increased, and above all that we shall not be bored. The central ideas of the court-romances are usually those of court and chivalry, continually repeated in act or speech.

Two men in particular seem to have promoted the growth of the court-romance: the unknown author of the *Eneas*,[1] and still more than he, Crestien de Troyes.

Crestien was at once the most fertile and the most cultivated poet in this sphere; he was also one of the earliest, having begun his career not long after 1150.

Others surpassed him at times in the choice of subject-matter or in single excellences; not one combined so perfectly as he all the traits of the court-poet; not one moves with such sureness upon the narrow line laid down by his art as he; not one knew how so wisely to restrain himself in indulgence.

As he was a virtuoso in language and metre, and was distinguished for his art in narration, for a fine sense in finding and applying psychological motive, he was likewise conspicuous for the noble sentiment which enabled him to work out the chivalric ideals in their most pure and humane spirit. Good-will and delicacy of feeling with him underlie the polite forms of courtly intercourse, and it is deep human sympathy and genuine, manly honour, as well as lust of fame

[1] His identity with Benoit de Sainte More seems to me very improbable.

and thirst for action, which impel the knight to his adventures.

Nevertheless, the conventional element is too strong, and we are not surprised that, with the epigonic poets, it almost overgrew all ethical substance and soon gave birth to satire.

Beside the metrical romance appeared the shorter metrical tale. It certainly developed very early from the songs of the *jongleurs*, although its extant monuments do not go back beyond the second half of the twelfth century, and it did not begin truly to flourish before the thirteenth. The tale was decidedly influenced in form and tone by the romance, and it took a courtly cast. Nevertheless, it remained unostentatious, and preserved much freedom, which indeed often went beyond the bounds of propriety.

There are three divisions in this class: the *lai*, which claims to rest upon songs, usually those of Breton origin; the *fabliau*, and the *dit*. The last two do not make this claim, and they differ from each other in that the former is more popular, and the latter betrays a tinge of erudition, as well as a didactic, and at times religious, bias. Naturally these classes often ran into each other, especially the *fabliau* and the *dit*, the distinctive names being often arbitrarily applied.

The short couplet was common to all three; besides this, the *dit* employed other forms, particularly after the thirteenth century, and the new form was often a single-rhymed strophe of Alexandrines, composed usually of four lines.

These names do not always denote an epic presentation. As the word *lai*, strictly meaning "song," in the lyrical poetry designates a poem rendered in a popular tone and composed of unequal strophes, so the form and name of the *dit* and the *fabliau* lend themselves to didactic and satirical works, to enumerations, descriptions of manners, and the like. Two or more personified things are often brought forward in them and made to contend for precedence,—and thus arises a class of poetry also having its special names (*desbat*, *desputoison*, *estrif*) and recalling the *jeu parti* of the art-lyric.

So far as mere narrative is concerned, three prominent cycles of material are to be distinguished: the Celtic saga, which is mainly at home in the *lais*; the legend, which

by its alliance with secular narrative yields the *conte dévot*, that adapts itself easily to the *dit;* finally and chiefly, the oriental tale, which is wont to join itself to every other kind of tradition. The fragments of the Teutonic myth can belong but to the second rank; likewise matter borrowed from ancient authors, who in their turn owe much to the Orient, to domestic saga connected with actual occurrences, and to pure invention.

The great mass of the materials of the mediæval tales came from India. They circulated in part singly, either in writing or orally; in part, and no doubt chiefly, in greater collections, where a series of single tales were bound together by a superior one, as by a frame. Through Persian, Arabian, Rabbinic versions, these collections reached Europe, where they found entrance to the Middle Latin literature, both from the east through the Greek, and by another and direct course. Often modified, expanded, abridged, robbed of older stories, increased by new ones, these cycles of tales and fables still frequently betray their oriental origin, even in their most recent occidental forms.

In the long journey from India to the Atlantic ocean, many single tales became detached from their larger connection, and they, too, suffered many vicissitudes. They usually continued their separate existence on through several metamorphoses, but they often incorporated themselves with another equally ancient, or some newly-created whole.

Of all the western literatures, the French was the first to adopt these materials, both taking up single tales, and absorbing entire collections.

Two such collections may be mentioned here: the *Book of the Seven Sages* and the *Disciplina clericalis*.

The former, whose history may be traced back to India, although the Indian original is lost, presented itself to French poets in twofold form. The type, which we will call *Historia septem sapientum Romae*, is more widely circulated, and nearer the ancient tradition, and it comprises many varieties. Several French versions under the name *Roman des sept sages*, are to be traced to this source. The other originated in Lorräine in the year 1184, from the pen of John, a monk of the abbey Haute Seille (*alta silva*). It is notable, both in details and as a whole, for many distinctive and peculiar

qualities. These may be partially explained by the fact that the author was but imperfectly acquainted with the tradition, and drew much new matter from oral communication. Some of the single tales given by him were doubtless in circulation among the people of his district. The connective or frame-story, though identical in its outlines with that of other compilations, underwent changes which perhaps owed their origin to the Normans in Sicily or southern Italy. This work, known by the title *Dolopathos*, was translated into French verse at the beginning of the thirteenth century, by a poet named Herbert.

The *Disciplina clericalis*, framed by a dialogue between an Arabian philosopher and his son, was rendered in Spain in the year 1106, from Arabian sources, by a baptised Jew, Petrus Alphonsus. It was at least twice translated into French; the best known version is entitled *Le castoiement d'un père a son fils.*

In moulding these foreign materials French poetry displayed great powers of assimilation; particularly as regards single tales, whose matter it converted entirely into its own flesh and blood.

The Breton *lais* retain most fully their native fragrance. They are usually romantic even when the topic is comic. But this is generally calculated to awaken seriousness and emotion; the poem is often pervaded by a tone of elegiac longing.

The *fabliau* in no respect excludes seriousness, but its dominant spirit is jocund and sportive, and though it often falls into licentiousness, it always maintains, with arch *naïveté*, a certain epic dignity. It often represents husbands, peasants, merchants, and especially clergymen, in delicate situations, exposes the morals of the time with much sprightliness, and with broad derision pillories the servants of the church. As we saw, the *dit* readily lent its name to pious, half-legendary tales, but was equally at home with every material; later it yielded the form in which many of the more compendious romances were brought within a brief compass.

In the poetical tale the art of narrating, in which, even in the Middle Ages, the French excelled, did not, as in the romance, have to contend with a vast and confused subject-matter.

The matter, as such, was attractive and already contained the unity of interest, proceeding from the unity of conception. The poet needed but delicately to work out the details, and to adorn them with the simple grace which many a Frenchman had at command.

IX.

Both Normans and Anglo-Normans took most active part in this entire epic literature. They developed the sagas of Arthur and Tristan and gave them to the French, and without them the Graal-saga would not have unfolded. Neither did the Normans lack poets who gave these and other materials the form of art. They cultivated the court-romance with success, but, both in England and on the Continent, they won deserved fame, especially in the *lai* and the *fabliau*. Other names in this field were eclipsed by that of Marie de France, who, although born in France, certainly spent a large part of her life in England. Marie's *lais* are distinguished by noble, touching simplicity, by a refined conception, and graceful expression. Her translation of Æsop's *Fables*, founded upon an English original traced to a king of enigmatical name, displays many qualities which make her a worthy forerunner of La Fontaine.

Marie de France cannot properly be counted among the true Anglo-Norman poets, on account of the purity of her language and verse. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, when she wrote, the corruption of the Norman tongue had already proceeded far; and the influence of English metrical art upon the French was making itself strongly felt with most poets. The fundamental principle of syllabic versification and the purport of the cæsura were often misconceived, and different kinds of verse mingled together. Such metrical peculiarities occur even in the Anglo-Norman poems of the second half of the twelfth century.

Besides the romance, the *lai*, and the *fabliau*, the Anglo-Normans continued to cultivate the legend and other branches of religious poetry, and not least, historical poetry.

The poetical presentation of history took a new impetus under Henry II., and largely through his incitement. We

have seen that Wace wrote for him his *Roman de Rou*. When Wace lost royal favour, Master Benoit, who is certainly none other than Benoit de Sainte More, had, at the commission of the sovereign, begun a new chronicle of the Norman dukes. This is notable for faults and virtues similar to those of the *Roman de Troie*. At about the same time, Jordan Fantosme, chancellor of Winchester cathedral, described the war of Henry II. against Scotland (1173–1174). This work purports to have been founded upon the statements of eye-witnesses and it leaves an impression of impartiality and historical fidelity, save in so far as the poetical form and style, to which a lively dialogue at times lends a rich charm, have sometimes warped the truth. As Lambert the Crooked had done in his Alexander romance, Jordan chose for his poem, with happy touch, the epic strain of Alexandrines. This was then generally becoming a favourite form, and was beginning to displace the ten-syllabled line in the *chanson de geste*, and to rival the short couplet in other classes of poetry. Jordan constructed his Alexandrines with Anglo-Norman freedom, in a manner suggesting both the English long line and the catalectic iambic tetrameter, and unquestionably to be traced to English influence. Finally, he inserted also lines of ten syllables. Sixty or seventy years later, the unknown poet of a legend of St. Alban *(Vie de seint Auban)* proceeded in exactly the same way.

King Henry conquered a part of Ireland in the year 1172, and in the beginning of the following century, the conquest was described by an unknown poet, who seems to have been both well-informed and honestly desirous of presenting, to the best of his ability, what he had learned.

The national English or Anglo-Danish traditions, as has been hinted, soon attracted the Norman poets. A Norman song of *Havelok* must have appeared as early as the beginning of the twelfth century; and upon this was founded both the version of the saga in Gaimar, and a younger poem, probably not much later than 1150. Strangely enough, this poem alluded to a Breton *lai* as its source, and other traces go to show that the Celts, either upon the British isle or the Continent, had really taken up this entirely un-Celtic tradition.

While the saga of *Havelok* thus took the form of a *lai*,

the *Horn*-saga was clothed in the form and style of the *chanson de geste*.

The latter change was still more pronounced in the saga of *Beuves de Hanstone*, which was connected, in its French form, directly with the Carlovingian cycle of sagas. On the contrary, *Guy of Warwick* was cast into a court-romance.

Personages from Anglo-Norman history, too, were celebrated in romantic poems, in the course of the thirteenth century. We have already mentioned Baron Fulke Fitz Warin, who was outlawed by King John. The adventurous life of the monk Eustace fell in the time of the same king. Eustace passed for a master of the black art. Born in the territory of the Count of Boulogne, he came to England in the latter part of his life, where he formed close relations with King John, which were at first friendly, and later, hostile. Finally, no less a personage than Richard Cœur de Lion became a subject of poetry, as he had early been a hero of the folk-saga.

Let us return to the time of Henry II. In the same epoch which saw the French and Provençal poesy grow to highest splendour, the mediæval renaissance, the revival of classical study in England, reached its culmination. Its masters were wont to get incentive and instruction in France; there, in spite of much hostility, the study of the antique had not yet receded, before religious fanaticism and the overgrowth of dialectical scholasticism, into the background of the ecclesiastical horizon, and it was already fertilising the national literature. Not only Virgil and Statius were turned into French; but before all others, Ovid, the poet of polite Roman society, received the applause of that courtly age. Crestien de Troyes (probably at the beginning of his career) had already translated the *Ars amandi* and the *Remedia amoris*, as well as numerous myths from the *Metamorphoses;* and many subsequently followed his example.

In greater or less proximity, there were grouped about the court of Henry II. a number of ecclesiastics, who were often employed also in political affairs. They united great learning with a certain man-of-the-world culture, and in devoting their leisure hours to literature, they did not forget the present in antiquity, nor life in theory. They were fond of writing about the history of their time, or the topography of

their country; they oftentimes regale us with anecdotes, as well as legends and sagas illustrating the mental tendencies of that time, and depict with keen observation, lifelike touch, and fresh colours the morals of the epoch, the life of the clergy, of the orders, and the doings at the court.

Above all others, John of Salisbury was conspicuous for his learning and culture. He had laid in Chartres and Paris the groundwork of his knowledge of the classics, of philosophy and theology. He was the friend, confidant, and biographer of Thomas Beket, was later bishop of Chartres, and died in 1180. His greatest work, called *Polycraticus*, was produced in about the years 1156–1159. It is remarkable for the vast reading displayed, which includes the writings of Plato and Aristotle, as far as they were then accessible to the author in translations; for the spirit pervading and illuminating the massive and not inartistically ordered material; and finally, for a graphic style in thoroughly good Latin. Beginning with an account of the follies and immoralities of the court, the author proceeds to the most important investigations, notably in politics and philosophy. In the latter field he discusses the different systems of ancient philosophy, and closes the subject with an exposition of his own essentially ethical system. John's *Metalogicus*, written in 1159, deals with logic, and here he duly puts down an opponent who had taunted him on account of his studies in philosophy.

The famous Walter Map, John's contemporary, was less subtle and profound, was more secular, and more harsh and sharp in the expression of his satirical moods, but he had learning and classical knowledge, was a man of great intellectual power, and genuine moral sense. He took a high place at the English court, often accompanied the king on his journeys, and died soon after 1196 as archdeacon of Oxford. Posterity has connected with his name a great number of Latin and French works; among these are romances of Arthur and the Graal in prose, and rollicking student songs. His *De nugis curialium* gives us a true image of his personality. This, as the title shows,[1] was suggested by the *Polycraticus*, but is not to be compared with it in scientific importance. Yet it contains much more circumstantial description of the English court and English society,

[1] A sub-title of the *Polycraticus* is *De nugis curialium.*

and its anecdotes and tales, its occasional comments, its spice of satire, directed especially against the Cistercians, offer rich material to the historian of culture.

The letters of Peter of Blois, the outcome of much art and erudition, cast a welcome light upon the history of the time. He, too, was an archdeacon, first of Bath, and later of London, having acted meanwhile (1191–1193) as secretary to Queen Eleanor. He survived Map but a few years. In his youth, he had written love-poems; he regretted this later without being able quite to forget his pleasure in them. They are lost as well as Peter's work, *De gestis Henrici.*

William of Newbury, who lived from 1136 to 1208, wrote the history of his time down to the year 1197, in an attractive style, influenced by the manner of William of Malmesbury. The age was beginning to make demands of the historian, which could not but spur him to raise his art above the level of dry annal writing, but which could easily allure him into paths not compatible with the seriousness of history. Above all were demanded interesting details, piquant tales, legends, and the like.

This taste explains the appearance of such works as the *Otia imperialia* of Gervase of Tilbury, a layman high in favour with the German emperor, Otto IV. This book was written in 1212 for the emperor's amusement. It is a remarkable mixture of material from general history, geography, natural philosophy, popular traditions, and legendary lore, a book, too, that, to this day, can attract and hold the reader. In earlier years Gervase had written a book of anecdotes *(Liber facetiarum)* for the young King Henry, who died in the year 1183.

The historian of culture likewise finds a rich treasure of varied material in the numerous writings of Gerald de Bary (died 1217). He was the son of a Norman father, and a mother related to the Welsh princes. He was brought up, as a youth, in Wales, and is known by the name of Giraldus Cambrensis. He was a man of comprehensive, many-sided knowledge, and great persuasiveness; he was not without vanity and ambition; with all his keenness of intellect and quick observation, he was rather superstitious, although he rejected with contempt the fictions of Geoffrey of Monmouth. His writings treat theology, politics, topography,

history, lives of the saints, and other subjects, and their style is ever lucid and pleasant, oftentimes pathetic and eloquent. His *Topographia Hiberniae*, to which he added a work on the conquest of Ireland *(Expugnatio Hiberniae)*, as well as his *Topographia Cambriae*, are a mine for the antiquarian and the student of history and folk-lore. His autobiography *(De gestis Giraldi Laboriosis)* is also interesting, and still more, perhaps, his *Speculum Ecclesiae*, a violent satire against the monks and the Roman curia.

Although less pleasing and more dry than these, the *De vita et gestis Henrici II. et Ricardi I.* is an invaluable historical authority for the period from 1170 to 1192. It probably appeared in the north of England. Formerly connected with the name of the abbot Benedict of Peterborough, it has been ascribed (probably incorrectly) by some recent investigators to Bishop Richard of London (died 1198), the son of Nigel. This Richard wrote a history of his time in three rubrics, (including, 1. ecclesiastical history, 2. political history, 3. miscellaneous matter), whence the title *Tricolumnis* or *Tricolumnus*. This work was apparently lost, but, by the scholars alluded to, it is considered identical with a part of the *Gesta Henrici II.* Another work of Richard, royal treasurer from about 1158 to his death, is preserved; this is the *Diologus de scaccario*, dating from the year 1178, and it treats, in animated style, but in barbaric Latin, of the constitution and conduct of the exchequer. About ten years later the lord chief-justice Ranulph of Glanvilla wrote his *Tractatus de legibus Angliae.*

Latin poetry was no less cultivated in England in the second half of the twelfth century than it had been in the first. Nearly all of the notable Latinists whom we have considered wrote Latin verses—we name here only John of Salisbury and Gerald de Bary. Likewise Alexander Neckam (1157–1217), perhaps the greatest polyhistor of his time, bequeathed to us a prose and a poetical natural history, besides many grammatical treatises.

But the most distinguished of all the English poets who ventured to contend for the laurels of the Latin muse was Joseph of Exeter, the singer of the Trojan war; he was the worthy peer of his still more famous French contemporary Walter de Chatillon, who, following Curtius and Justinus,

wrote an *Alexandreis* in verses that enchanted the Middle Ages.

During the reign of Richard II. the laws of Latin versification were collated, with illustrative examples, and put into verse, by Geoffrey of Vinsauf *(de Vinosalvo)*, also called Galfridus Anglicus. This poem, named *Nova poetria*, and dedicated to Pope Innocent III., has little intrinsic charm. It was begun in 1193, but not finished until after King Richard's death (1199). Its influence upon the versifiers of the thirteenth century was decisive, and Geoffrey's name had good repute down to Chaucer's time.

Besides the more scholastic poetry, the Middle Ages knew a Latin poetry of another sort, a poetry which moved free and unconstrained in the ancient language, as in undress, and was more closely connected with actual life. This poetry was throughout essentially international, and seems to have been cultivated as early as the tenth century, and to have received a powerful impulse in the eleventh and in the twelfth. The composers of this non-academic poetry came mainly from the younger and elder youth of the schools, the clerks. These, inclined by nature to wandering, roved from land to land in the age of the crusades, and led an adventurous but usually a rather unedifying life, which was reflected in their songs. Their favourite themes were love and wine; in which they followed the ancients, but quite independently. In the manner of the late Latin popular poetry and a great part of the ecclesiastical songs, whose forms they took up, they were wont to construct their verses in rhythm merely, without regard to quantity, and to adorn them with rhyme, which they often handled with admirable skill. Their songs were most probably influential in the beginnings of the Romanic love-song, as, in the wider range, there was a reciprocal influence between the poetry of the itinerant clerks and the national poetry of several western nations. They kept aloof from conventional courtly life; their art was the undisguised expression of exuberant youthful force, carried away by classical models to a sort of pantheistic enthusiasm for nature and beauty. Their verses had a fresh, sprightly tone, and sometimes a truly Bacchic strain, as in the famous *mihi est propositum in taberna mori.* This was a fragment

of a general confession[1] of the "archpoet Walter" (*archipoeta Walterus*), who seems to have been neither an Englishman nor a Frenchman, though his songs were applauded in those countries no less than in Germany. Like the gleemen, the *jongleurs*, with whom they often mingled, the *vagantes* were apparently in many ways intermediary between the courtly and the popular poetry; their hand seems discernible in many a French love and drinking-song, in many a *fabliau*. As the troubadours had their *sirventes* as well as their *canzone*, so the *vagantes*, or others in their style, sang of serious things, of historical events, as well as of wine, women, and dice. But they loved satire most, and they directed its edge against the clergy, and chiefly against the Roman curia.

A poem from the last quarter of the twelfth century gives a glimpse of life and doings at Salerno and Paris, and especially of the "English nation" at the university of the latter city; this is the *Speculum stultorum* of Nigellus, which is in spirit most closely related to the songs of the *vagantes*. The poem is composed in distichs, and its subject-matter is the marvellous adventures of an ambitious ass named Brunellus, who is discontented at the shortness of his tail, and strives for loftier things. He is meant for a type of monachism. The different orders, including the nuns, are sharply scrutinised, and found utterly worthless.

X.

We now pass from the more aristocratic Latin and Romanic world to the sphere where the sound of the English tongue was heard. Its literature took a new impetus toward the beginning of the thirteenth century. At the same time it seems to have unfolded more to the influence of foreign poetry, though but in a limited degree, and in no respect universally.

The venerable form of Laȝamon confronts us at the threshold of the century.

Laȝamon, son of Leovenath, was a priest of Arley Regis,

[1] It is also known by the name *Confessio Goliae*. The wandering clerks were often called Goliards, which is perhaps connected with the Romanic *gaillard*, *gagliardo*. From this they may themselves, in mere wantonness, have formed the name *Golias*, as a personification of the immoral clergy.

in Worcestershire, on the right bank of the Severn. His was a thoughtful and poetic nature, strongly fascinated by the spirit of the past, though he lacked a more profound scientific culture. He knew little French and less Latin, and had a very imperfect knowledge of native and classical history. Perhaps he drew his information more from oral tradition than from books. He certainly preferred writings that stirred the fancy, to dry, annalistic works and learned treatises. He had a sensitive ear for the spirited rhythm of the national songs. He had hoarded a mass of sagas and local traditions. The region where he dwelt must have been rich in relics of the life and customs of the past. There the Dane had never gained a lasting foothold; there existed no great commercial cities to open trade with other countries. The Norman Conquest had included also that district, it is true, and Frenchmen had settled there; nor did it lack many links to connect it with Normandy. Not far from Arley, a little further up the Severn, was the birthplace of Ordericus Vitalis. Little time had yet passed since conquerors and conquered had regarded each other with a hostile eye. At that period there were, perhaps, few men in Worcestershire to whom the Norman-French culture had been revealed, even as fully as to Laȝamon. But the English inhabitants of those districts had lived, from the time of their first establishment there by force, in constant proximity and intercourse with the Welsh. An interchange of intellectual property between Celts and Teutons was in time unavoidable in the Welsh marches. More than one Celtic saga found its way into English tradition. After the rise of the Arthurian cult and the tales of the British kings in the twelfth century, many a tradition of Celtic or Germanic origin must have gained importance and new adornment in the Welsh borders, by attaching itself to the great British saga-cycle.

In such a mental atmosphere lived Laȝamon, when the thought came to him of writing a history of those who first had possession of England "after the flood," or as a Norman would, perhaps, even then have called it, a *Brut*. To get the books needed seems to have cost the priest, living in rural seclusion, much trouble and several journeys. He finally succeeded in procuring Aelfred's *Beda*, Beda's original work, and Wace's *Geste des Bretons*. The first two were

of little use to him. He evidently studied them but slightly. There is hardly a trace in Laȝamon indicating that he used Beda's *Ecclesiastical History*, if we except the narrative of Pope Gregory's meeting with Anglo-Saxon prisoners in Rome, which led to the conversion of England. He does not seem to have discerned the relation of the English translation to the original, nor the authorship of either. He ascribes the English text to Beda himself, and he evidently refers to the Latin original when he speaks of a book which St. Albin[1] made and the "feire Austin" who brought baptism to England. Wace's poem, therefore, alone remains, and this formed the basis of Laȝamon's work, although he used a number of other, either oral or written, sources for the details of his narrative.

Wace had translated the highly coloured, somewhat strained prose of Geoffrey into the French short couplet, which was growing popular in his time, and which he could cleverly wield. The adventure-crowded, mystical subject-matter, pervaded by the spirit of chivalry, was thus treated with an unostentatious *naïveté* that better became it than the impassioned rhetoric of the original. The Celtic traditions were invested in Laȝamon's mind with all the splendour and dignity of the English epic, and he turned to the old national verse as a natural resource. He handles this form as he knew it from the folk-songs he had heard in Worcestershire.

The alliteration is not everywhere rigidly retained; still less is rhyme excluded; and where alliteration predominates, the verse often seems, from the division of the sentence, to break into two short lines. Thus we have a metre which externally does not deviate much from that of the *Geste des Bretons*. But the laws of Old English accent and rhythm are everywhere in full force; the alliteration, which holds a much higher place than rhyme, transmits an abundance of powerful epic chords. The diction, dignified in its simplicity, has at times a true epic strain. Hence we breathe here quite a different atmosphere from that in which the Norman *trouvère* existed. Laȝamon's language adopts but few foreign elements, in spite of its French source, and it is replete with ancient forms, expressions, phrases, which often give us

[1] Albinus, Abbot of Canterbury (died 732), is extolled by Beda for his learning and the rich material which he contributed to the *Ecclesiastical History*, and is called *auctor ante omnes atque adjutor huius opusculi*.

a glimpse into the background of English antiquity. All this betokens a poet who did not simply translate his authority, but worked over the foreign material in popular wise, and derived the form for it from his own intuitive sense.

If Geoffrey's tales had grown in volume in the hands of Wace, the English poet expands them to colossal dimensions. While Laȝamon skips but little of his original, he amplifies and adds everywhere. He portrays in full situations to which Wace merely alludes. He transforms the dry statement regarding a speech or a discourse into a dramatic scene. And he intersperses many quite special particulars, names, even entire tales, in which he often not only augments the material, but departs from his author and contradicts him. Some of Laȝamon's interpolations can have been derived from traditions clinging to places not far distant from the poet's home; as the tale of the founding of Gloucester, and the story of the capture of Cirencester by Gormund, which he gives more fully than Wace. But the scene of the episodes interwoven by Laȝamon extends over the entire British isle, and beyond it. Many of these additions seem to be derived from British sources; some rest, beyond doubt, upon English tradition. In connecting single tales to the whole work, the poet frequently commits flagrant anachronisms; as when he makes the *cheorles* of East-Anglia, under the twin brothers Ethelbald and Aelfwald, rise against Gratian long before the English immigration. Among the various amplifications, those relating to Arthur are conspicuous in extent and importance. They show how busy the Celtic and English fancy in the west of England then was in this sphere of tradition. Laȝamon's rendering of the Arthurian saga even gives echoes of the Germanic myth. Elves appear at Arthur's cradle to bestow upon him beautiful gifts for his future life.

> As soon as he came into the world, elves received him. They sang over him with strong spell. They gave him power to be the best of all knights; they gave him a second gift: to become a mighty king; they gave him a third: to have long life; they gave the king's son very excellent virtues, so that he was generous above all living men. These things the elves gave him, and the child flourished.[1]

When Arthur equips himself for the attack on Bath, he puts on the corslet which an elfish smith, called Wygar, the

[1] Laȝamon's *Brut*, ed. Sir F. Madden, ii. 384, *et seq.*

skilful wright,[1] has made with his precious art. Thus dim traditions from the national pre-historic age are made to serve for the glorification of the national enemy. In many places Teutonic and Celtic sagas touch or blend. Who could draw a distinct line between these two elements? And though it matured in Wales, is not the Arthurian saga, as a whole, an international product?

Laȝamon gives a pleasing account of the origin of the Round Table, whose name first appears in Wace; this account, it would seem, is a truly popular one, and was perhaps unknown to the early stages of the Arthurian tradition.

The narrative of Arthur's last days is very poetical: as his dream[2] telling him of the treachery of Modred and Wenhever (Genevra), when he is in the field in Gaul and is thinking of the conquest of Rome; his return; his conflict with Modred; and his death. The two last-named passages deserve to be quoted:

They met on the Tambre,[3] the place is called Camelford, that name will last forever. And there were collected at Camelford sixty thousand and over: Modred was their chieftain. Then the mighty Arthur rode forth with an innumerable host, which was, indeed, doomed to death. On the Tambre they met each other. They raised their banners, moved toward each other, they drew their long swords, and smote upon the helmets, so that fire sprang forth, spears were shivered, shields were cut in little pieces, shafts were shattered. There fought an innumerable host. The Tambre swelled with the vast blood-stream. No one was able, in the struggle, to recognise any warrior, or to see who fought better, who worse: so thick was the throng. For each struck right out, knight or bondman. Then Modred was slain, bereft of the light of life, and all his knights were felled in the battle. All the brave ones were slain, Arthur's warriors, high and low, and all the Britons from Arthur's table, and all his wards, from many kingdoms. And Arthur himself was wounded by a broad battle-spear; he had received fifteen bloody wounds; into the smallest one might thrust two gloves. Then there survived in the battle, of 200,000 men who lay there slaughtered, none save Arthur alone and two of his knights. Arthur was incredibly wounded. Then a youth stepped to him, his kinsman. It was the son of Cador, the count of Cornwall. The youth's name was Constantine, he was dear to the king. Arthur glanced at him as he lay upon the ground, and spoke these words from a sorrowful heart: "Thou art welcome, Constantine, thou wert Cador's son. I here deliver to thee my kingdoms, and guard thou my Britons, thy life long, and keep to them all laws, which have been in

[1] Laȝamon's *Brut*, ii. 463, *et seq.*

[2] Wace and Geoffrey know as little of this dream of Arthur as of the manner of his transfer to Avalun.

[3] Better Camel; earlier Camlan.

force in my days, and all the good laws in force in the days of Uther. And I will go to Avalun, to the most beauteous of all maidens, to the queen Argante, the splendid elf. And she will heal all my wounds, and make me yet quite well with a healing drink. And afterwards I will come again to my kingdom, and dwell among the Britons in great bliss." While he was saying this, a little boat came from the sea, borne by the waves, with two women therein of marvellous figure. And they at once took Arthur and brought him to the boat, laid him in it, and sailed away. Then was fulfilled what Merlin said of yore, that there should be mighty grief at Arthur's demise. The Britons still believe that he is alive, and dwells in Avalun, with the most beautiful of all elves, and the Britons still watch for his return. Never was the man born or chosen by a woman who could with truth say more of Arthur. But of yore there was a prophet named Merlin. He announced with words—his sayings were true—that an Arthur should yet come to the help of the Britons.[1]

Thus Laȝamon's writing far surpasses that of his author. Of all English poets after the Conquest, none approached the Old English epos so closely as he, and hardly any metrical chronicle of the Middle Ages can rival Laȝamon's *Brut* in poetical worth. The merits of his style appear most brilliantly in the portrayal of battle and strife, and of the combat with the surging sea. Though his diction has none of the copiousness of the ancient epic language, yet in comparison with later times, it must be termed rich, and most graphic and effective. It is highly imaginative, but contains few detailed similes. The very picturesquely and delicately executed simile drawn from the fox-hunt is so applied that neither design nor pretension on the part of the poet appears. He puts it in the mouth of his hero, Arthur, who, rejoicing at the subjection of his enemy, the emperor Childric, exclaims with a loud voice:

Thanks be to the Lord who rules all dooms, that Childric the strong, is weary of my land. He has divided my land among his knights, he thought to drive me myself from my people, to humiliate me, and possess my empire, and utterly to destroy my kindred, and to put my people to death. But it has gone with him as it goes with the fox. When he is boldest upon the wold, and has full play and fowls enough, he climbs in wantonness, and seeks rocks, works himself holes in the wilderness. Whatever may fare, he knows never a care. He thinks that he is strong, the boldest of all animals. But when he sees men approach under the mountain with horns, with dogs, with loud cries, then the hunters shout, then the dogs yelp, they drive the fox over downs and dales. He flees to the holm and seeks his den; in the farthest end of his den, he hides himself. Then is the bold fox

[1] Laȝamon's *Brut*, iii. 140, *et seq.*

bereft of all joy, and men dig for him on each side. Then is the proudest of all animals most wretched. So it was with Childric, the strong and powerful. He thought to get all my kingdom into his own hands, but now I have driven him to bare death, whether I choose to slay or hang him.[1]

A most significant figure, Laȝamon stands upon the dividing line between two great periods, which he unites in a singular manner. He once more reproduces for us an age that is forever past. At the same time he is the first English poet to draw from French sources, the first to sing of King Arthur in English verse.

XI.

Some time elapsed before Laȝamon's example found imitation. Traces are not lacking, it is true, which denote that sagas like those of Charlemagne and the twelve peers were carried, in the first third of the thirteenth century, from the hall of the Norman baron to the servants' rooms, and thence to the neighbouring village; but it is very doubtful whether literature had anything to do with such transference of intellectual possessions. Of pieces sung or recited at that time by English harpers and singers, *seggers* or *disours*, there remains to us but little; and indeed nothing in the original form. We do not know what their attitude was toward their gentler Norman colleagues. Their service as mediators between two heterogeneous spheres of thought and material is, for that epoch, almost entirely beyond the reach of our judgment. In the field of literature the task of mediation fell, in the first place, to the ecclesiastics; and the literary activity of the clergy, if not its concern, was for a long time confined to theological and didactic subjects. But soon after the appearance of Laȝamon, a tranquil yet powerful influence of the new culture-ferment, coming chiefly from France, began to assert itself in these fields.

But for some time this influence was especially perceptible only in the south of England. The districts, which we will call Anglian, after the old tribal name, were, during a half century, but slightly pervaded by it. We will glance first at these.

In the northeastern part of the former kingdom of Mercia

[1] Laȝamon's *Brut*, ii. 450, *et seq.*

there lived in the first quarter of the thirteenth century[1] a monk named Orm, inmate of an Augustine monastery. The spot lay wholly within the territory of the Danish invasions and settlements; and it is quite possible that Orm himself, whose name has no English ring, was of Danish descent on his father's side. The blending of races in that region had clearly left its mark on the language. Norse expressions had come into it. Prefixes and end-syllables were in great part weakened or dropped; many distinctions of inflection had been obliterated. Of French elements, this language as yet had none. French literature and culture had probably gained no foothold in this region Into the loneliness of the cloister where Orm dwelt their influence had certainly not yet penetrated. There seems to have been but little knowledge of the ecclesiastical writers of the new era, men like Anselm, Abelard, Bernard, the celebrities of St. Victor, or like Honorius Augustodunensis. Orm's theological tradition went back to Aelfric and his school. He seems quite at home in Aelfric's writings, as well as in those of Beda and Augustine. Dear to him as to Aelfric was the fostering of the mother-tongue, and the work of teaching the ignorant masses. We recognise in these qualities the man who was fitted to undertake a great and important work for the English people. Another Augustine monk named Walter—Orm designates him as threefold his brother: in the flesh, in the faith, and in the order—urged him to translate and explain the gospels for the ecclesiastical year. Orm yielded and gave all his industry to the work. In accordance with the spirit of the time, he chose the poetical form for his exposition. But the vibrant rhythm of the alliterative verse could little suit his severe taste. Hence he decided upon the iambic *septenarius*; thus following the example of the author of the *Poema morale*, a poem of which many copies had been circulated over England, and which called forth many imitations. Unlike his predecessor, Orm reproduced the foreign metre with pains-taking accuracy. The up-beat (*Auftakt*, *anacrusis*) never fails; the line always numbers fifteen syllables. Violence is not seldom done to the English accent to suit the demands of metre. For convenience or from purism, Orm disdains rhyme as well as alliteration.

[1] Time and especially place are not absolutely certain; but the statement in the text cannot be very far from the truth.

The work proceeds in this smooth and regular form without poetical exaltation, and is unadorned and simple, somewhat stiff, but on the whole, clear and intelligible. In order "to fill out his verse,"[1] Orm adds, even in his translation, many a word not in the original. And he believes he has made the text more intelligible to the reader by his additions.[2] The diffuse paraphrase (for so it must be called) is followed, in each case, by a still more diffuse commentary on the text of the gospel treated. As in his originals, upon which he is wholly dependent, the allegorico-mystical interpretation predominates, with its depth, its subtlety, and its childish playing with words. More pedantic, less poetical than Aelfric, Orm is often not so fortunate in selection as he, and what is offered gains nothing by the form in which he clothes it. But the melody of the verse has a certain charm; at times the accord of form and matter yields a happy finish. His clear language sometimes becomes impressive. The goodness and the loving nature of the writer are often touchingly disclosed. But the homilist uses far too many words to say what he has in mind; and while he is both bold enough to form complex sentences, and too conscientious to be silent upon a single point, or to leave it in a charitable half-light, like a bad orator, he resorts every moment to repetition. He repeats himself in words, sentences, and lines; sometimes in entire groups of sentences and lines, possibly to gain a kind of musical effect. Orm's strength lies where his weakness also appears, in his sense of completeness, distinctness, purity, correctness. These qualities manifest themselves most strikingly in his spelling, which, from a consistency and precision remarkable for the time, offends the eye as much as it must rejoice the heart of the grammarian.

Orm looked back upon the finished work with satisfaction. This is perceptible throughout the dedication to his brother Walter; and not less in the line with which he begins his introduction:

> Þiss boc is nemmnedd Orrmulum forrþi þatt Orrm itt wrohhte.
> This book is named Ormulum for that Orm it wrought.

The *Ormulum* has come down to us a torso; perhaps only one-eighth of the complete collection of homilies remains.

[1] Dedication, v. 44, 64.
[2] *Ibid.*, v. 45. *et seq.*

But this eighth consists of over ten thousand lines—an imposing monument of persistent, pious industry, a rich fund of instruction for the linguist.

A poem for which no author is named appeared upon Anglian territory two or three decades after the *Ormulum*. Romanic elements are not entirely lacking in the language of this production, but they are so few as to be scarcely noticeable.

The poem is an English *Physiologus*, and is known by the name of the *Bestiary*.

The Latin original, formerly ascribed to Hildebert de Tours, is the work of a certain Tebaldus, according to some manuscripts, an Italian. It contains twelve sections in varying metres, and with frequent rhymes. The first section purposely treats of the lion, the symbol of Christ; and in the poet's estimation, it is the pith of the whole,[1] for he says the poem is written to the praise and honour of Christ.[2] The panther, considered in the last section, likewise denotes Christ. The style is generally dry; the poet plainly aims at elegance, but is rarely successful.

The English poet, in the main, faithfully followed this model. The contents and arrangement of the single sections agree, save a few trifling discrepancies. He adds, however, a thirteenth section, in which he describes and interprets the dove, according to a tradition then widely circulated. The subject-matter in Alexander Neckam's *De naturis rerum* (I. 56) differs but little from it. The English poet rarely changes Tebaldus in details. He suppresses but little, and adds scarcely a noteworthy feature.[3] But he evidently endeavours to make details more picturesque and graphic. His style is much less forced than that of his original, and though often exceedingly naïve, it has some poetic charm. The metrical form fluctuates between ancient and modern principles. It is founded upon a short line, having, as a rule, four accents with a soundless, or three accents with a sonorous close,[4] four accents also occurring in the latter case. Two short lines are sometimes united by alliteration, some-

[1] See the opening.
[2] Compare v. 2, 317, *et seq.*
[3] V. 610 *et seq.* is perhaps an exception.
[4] The soundless close is either a masculine ending or a feminine ending with a short accented syllable; the sonorous close is a double ending in which the accented syllable is long.

times by rhyme; besides couplets, there are quatrains with crossed rhyme. These forms follow each other in quick succession, yet long passages and entire sections sometimes differ in metre. As we seem to discern short or long lines constructed after different laws, we are now reminded of the *Poema morale*, now of the *Paternoster*, and often of the ancient epic verse. It is perhaps significant that alliteration prevails in the descriptive parts, and rhyme in the interpretative, cross-rhyme appearing especially in the latter.

Romanic influence is much more evident in a poetical version of *Genesis* than in the *Bestiary;* a version that originated in the same district, and certainly not much later than that poem. The short couplet is regularly handled on a new principle, and with great precision and dexterity, in a manner closely approaching the syllabic character of the corresponding French form. The style also unmistakably shows that the poet was at least not unfamiliar with the Norman clerical poetry. His chief source was a Latin one, but it belonged emphatically to the theology of the new era. He used, besides the Bible (we may almost say *before* it), the *Historia scholastica* of the learned French priest Petrus Comestor, which dates from between the years 1169 and 1175. This work compendiously discusses the biblical history, from the creation of the empyreum to the death of the apostles Peter and Paul, and it became the groundwork of nearly all later mediæval Bible commentaries. There is a tradition that indicates Comestor's place in theological literature; it makes him the brother of the author of the *Sentences*, Petrus Lombardus, and of the great canonist Gratian. The English poet throughout founds his work upon the *Historia scholastica;* or upon the section relating to the book of Genesis. And he follows it even when he cites more ancient authorities, as Josephus, who is often utilised and quoted by Petrus. In the first division of the poem, however, he seems, if only in passing, to have drawn from other sources; the *Comput* of Philipe de Thaun was perhaps among them. His chief merit lies in the skill with which he selected from Comestor's copious material what was useful and suitable for his readers, as well as in the livery he gave it. His style is simple, somewhat severe, but not without life, and not unpleasing; it often calls to mind

the manner of Wace. Its customary clearness rarely suffers in the effort to attain succinct brevity; this effort is sometimes suggestive of prudery. Now and then the poet's religious enthusiasm communicates a poetical glow to his verse. In such cases we understand why he calls his poem a "song," which term is perhaps not to be taken literally. It could indeed be sung, though necessarily in unequal strophes. Whether the fact that the same rhyme sometimes appears in a succession of verse-pairs points in that direction or not, must remain undecided.

The *Genesis* seems, soon after its appearance, to have inspired another poet to write an *Exodus* in a similar vein. This other poet was presumably a fellow-monk or the successor in some ecclesiastical office of the author of the *Genesis;* indeed, the possibility that they are identical[1] is not to be utterly rejected, though this is not probable. The language of the *Exodus* poet differs from that of his predecessor only in delicate *nuances.* He conforms to the latter in versification and style, and successfully imitates him although he does not profess to write a "song." With still less claim to learning than his model, he makes use of the same original, whose sense, moreover, he sometimes fails accurately to reproduce. He was obliged to select from the material before him to a far greater extent than the poet of the *Genesis.* Inasmuch as he carried the history of the Israelites to the death of Moses, he not only had to use the *Historia scholastica* in the part on Exodus, but he was obliged to draw historical material from Numbers and Deuteronomy. He wisely passed over Leviticus, as also the detailed ritualistic parts of Exodus.

Taken as a whole, the *Genesis* and *Exodus* are a monument of no mean interest to literary history. This is the first attempt, after a long interval, to bring the ancient epochs of biblical history more directly before the English people; and it is one of the oldest English poems in which the verse and style of the French clerical poetry were successfully imitated.

The circulation of the poem does not seem to have been so great as might have been expected.

[1] This theory has hitherto been accepted without question. The *Exodus* immediately follows the *Genesis* in the MS. of the Corpus Christi College of Cambridge, though the latter does not lack a distinct closing passus; and both poems have been edited as one work by Richard Morris for the Early English Text Society: *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*, 1865; 2d ed., 1874

XII.

The development at this time in the literature of the South was unquestionably more momentous than that just considered. A series of phenomena, of themes and forms, succeeded in the space of a half-century. To a stronger echo of English antiquity responded the tones of a new age and culture.

The lives of three saints first attract our attention, of *seinte Marherete*, *seinte Juliane*, and *seinte Katerine*. Written in alliterative long lines, or in rythmical, alliterative prose, their diction, with its touch of enthusiasm, contains much that recalls the good old times of poetry. Their language, as compared with Orm's, has wealth and colour. Yet occasional French expressions, as well as the choice of materials, remind us that we are in the thirteenth century. It is true that these three saints, with innumerable others, had been celebrated in English speech before the Conquest. Cynewulf himself had sung St. Juliana in impassioned rhythms. But it is scarcely fortuitous that three female saints should now appear together, in whose legends is varied the power of faith and the might of virginity in conflict with the powers of hell and of this world. The ideal of virgin purity was in the foreground of the moral consciousness of the age, and it gained in influence, as immorality became more gigantic in consequence of the crusades, of unsettled life, and of contact with eastern nations. The alliterative homily on the text, *Audi filia et vide et inclina aurem tuam*, is closely related, in time and place of origin, to these three legends. In literary history it is known by the name *Hali Meidenhad*, Holy Maidenhood. Neither moralists nor religious poets wearied in the praise of this crown of all virtues; directions on the surest way of guarding it form one of the most important chapters of practical theology. Divine love was contrasted with sensual desire and impure love. The ancient theme of Christ as bridegroom wooing the soul, of the soul pining for the love of the heavenly bridegroom, was treated with much variety and rich poetical cast. The cult of the Virgin Mary was most closely connected with this; the virgin mother of God, whose beauty fills the solitary penitent and the pious hermit with longing, and which St. Bernard so

highly extolled, was venerated in England from the beginning of the thirteenth century, with an enthusiasm beside which the love and admiration of the Old English church for her seems cold. A sort of womanly tone pervaded the writings in this sphere of thought. Thus, divine love ("*die Gottesminne*"), in the mediæval sense, became a new theme in English literature, before secular love-poetry, as it had "sprung up in the valleys of Provence"[1] more than a hundred years before, could take root there. The impulse proceeding from France, which then had spread over Germany and was beginning to make itself felt in Italy, in English-speaking England, first affected the religious literature.[2]

From this came a new rise of prose, and the growth of a new lyrical poetry.

The most notable prose monument of the time is the first after a long interval that may be compared with the products of former centuries. Characteristically enough, it is an ascetic rule written for three young nuns by a highly educated and respected ecclesiastic. Three sisters of noble blood, universally loved for their kindness and magnanimity, had renounced[3] the world in the bloom of their years and withdrawn to the solitude of a cloister, where they dwelt as the only inmates, with their women-servants and some attending lay-brothers. Our author seems to have stood near them as spiritual adviser, though probably not as actual pastor. Upon their urgent and repeated request, he wrote for them his *Regulae inclusarum* or *Ancren Riwle* (Anchoresses' Rule). This work betokens much learning, great knowledge of the human heart, as well as deep piety, and a refined and gentle spirit. Within the scope of a sharply limited view of life, it shows breadth of mind and freedom of thought.

"There are many kinds of rules," says the author in the introduction, "but among them are two of which, with God's help, I will speak in accordance with your request. The one rules the heart, makes it even and smooth . . . . this rule is ever with you . . . . it is the *caritas* which the apostle describes, 'out of a pure heart, and of a good

[1] In den Thalen der Provence
Ist der Minnesang entsprossen.
—UHLAND, *Rudello.*

[2] We observe the same phenomenon elsewhere, and in other epochs.

[3] *Ancren Riwle*, p. 192.

conscience, and of faith unfeigned.' . . . . the other rule is all outward and rules the body and bodily acts . . . . the other is as a lady, this is as her handmaid; for whatever men do of the other outwardly is only to rule the heart within."[1] The inner rule is unchangeable; to observe it, a duty. The outer has to do with persons and circumstances; the sisters may follow, in this regard, what the author imposes upon them, but they are to take no vow to keep his directions as commandments (of God). The writer devotes to the external rule only the first and the last of the eight books of his work; the former treats of "service" (*seruise*), or of the prayers to be offered daily, ceremonies, and the like; the latter, of the ordering of the outward life. The remaining books all consider the inner rule. The five senses are first taken up, "which guard the heart like watchmen, when they are true": a theme that frequently recurs in ecclesiastical literature, and often worked out in broad allegory. The anchorite's life is next presented; the virtues it requires, the contentment it yields, are depicted, and the grounds are stated that admonish us to renounce the world. The fourth book considers fleshly and spiritual temptations; the fifth, confession, and the sixth, penance. This serves as a preparation for the central part of the work, whose topic is purity of heart, and love of Christ.

The method is sometimes systematic, sometimes free. As a whole, the work evinces the effect of a learning given to subtle distinctions. And with it is that feeling for allegory and parable which, awakened by the Scriptures and the fathers of the church, developed most richly under the most various influences in the later Middle Ages, and which a strongly expanding mysticism moulded to its purposes. Neither does the work lack popular features, touches full of human life. Many legends are related or called to mind; names and examples from the Old and New Testaments, from the different centuries of the Christian church, continually occur, and the author sometimes glances at profane history. Everywhere are images, illustrations. We cannot fail to recognise the workings of the new schools of preachers, though the author neither resorts to the most common topics of daily life nor interweaves any true fables into his

[1] *Ancren Riwle*, p. 2, 4.

work. The text is interlarded with Latin quotations, which are often left untranslated. Besides the Scriptures, from which he chiefly draws, he also cites Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, Anselm, and, notably, Bernard. The chapter on penance confessedly follows most closely the teachings of the great church father of the twelfth century. Thus the theology of the new era here has a decided effect. The author was, without question, acted upon by French culture in the broader sense. He very often resorts to French expressions; and as he distinctly presupposes a knowledge of this language in his nuns, he had perhaps himself read many a French book, and frequently spoken the language in polite circles. He has, nevertheless, a good English construction. His style is simple and dignified, and unites grace and graphic picturesqueness with the free movement of that period. The reader must not look for a strictly logical structure of sentences, nor an artistic grouping of periods. The particles have not yet acquired the power sharply to define and give the delicate shadings of highly cultivated speech; the mysteries of word-arrangement are, in great part, still unsolved. Naïve and spontaneous, as it seems, we are charmed by this language, which already contains so much art, and has so rich a history behind it; hence it strikes us as graceful, despite its clumsiness.

The passage on comfort in temptations affords a good specimen:

Þe sixte kunfort is, þet ure Louerd, hwon he iðoleð þet we beoð itented, he plaieð mid us, ase þe moder mid hire ȝunge deorlinge: vlihð from him, and hut hire, and let hit sitten one, and loken ȝeorne abuten, and cleopien, Dame! dame! and weopen one hwule; and þeonne mid ispredde ermes leapeð lauhwinde uorð, and cluppeð and cusseð, and wipeð his eien. Riht so ure Louerd let us one iwurðen oðer hwules, and wiðdraweð his grace, and his cumfort, and his elne, þet we ne iuindeð swetnesse in none þinge þet we wel doð, ne sauur of heorte; and tauh, iðet ilke point, ne luueð he us ure leoue ueder neuer þe lesce, auh he deð hit for muchel luue þet he haueð to us. *Ancren Riwle*, p. 230, *et seq.*

The sixth comfort is that our Lord, when he permits that we be tempted, plays with us, as a mother with her young darling: she flies from it, and hides herself, and lets it sit alone, and look about anxiously and cry "Dame! Dame!" and weep awhile; and then she leaps forth laughing, with outspread arms, and embraces and kisses it, and wipes its eyes. Just so our Lord sometimes leaves us alone, and withdraws his grace, his comfort, and his support, so that we find no sweet-

ness in anything we do well, nor any satisfaction of heart. And yet He loves us at the same time, our dear Father, nevertheless, but He does it for the great love that He has for us.

The author reveals his innermost being in the chapter that we have called the central one of his work. There the theme of divine love is treated in the tender, charming manner, which forms such a notable contrast to that of the more ancient English writers. A beautiful parable discloses Christ, who, in the person of a mighty king, does everything to win the love of the human soul; he hastens to the help of a poor castle-lady, hard pressed by her enemies, loads her with favours, woos her with all the sweetness of his being, and, not deterred by her indifference or heartlessness, offers up his life as a sacrifice for her. This is dwelt upon at length, and with impressive admonitions. The love of Christ is compared with every other kind of love, and portrayed in its glory. Christ himself is introduced speaking to the soul. "Thy love, says the Lord, is either to be given freely, or it is to be sold, or stolen and taken by force. If it is to be given, where couldst thou better bestow it than upon me? Am I not the fairest thing? Am I not the richest king? Am I not of the highest lineage? . . . . Am I not the most courteous of men? Am I not the most liberal of men? Am I not of all things the sweetest and loveliest? . . . . If thy love is not to be given, but thou wilt by all means that it be bought, do say how: either with other love or with somewhat else? One rightly sells love for love, and thus love ought to be sold, and for nothing else. If thy love is to be sold, I have bought it with love above all other. . . . . And if thou sayest that thou wilt not value it so cheaply, but thou wilt have yet more, name what it shall be. Set a price upon thy love. Thou shalt not say so much, that I will not give thee much more for thy love. Wouldst thou have castles and kingdoms? Wouldst thou rule all this world? I will do better for thee. I will make thee, with all this, queen of heaven."[1]

The same theme underlies a special minor work, called *Wohunge of ure Lauerde*. Here it is the soul that has chosen Christ as her bridegroom, and while she tenders him her love, she extols him in language full of poetry and warmth and overflowing feeling. Many of its passages naturally accord

[1] *Ancren Riwle*, p. 397, *et seq.*

with the seventh book of the *Ancren Riwle*. We are also brought into the same circle of ideas and feelings by some prayers to Christ or the Holy Virgin, which have come to us scattered in contemporary manuscripts.

To the fondness of that age for parable and allegory, we owe, among other things, the graceful homily[1] on Matt. xxiv. 43, by a gifted writer. Man is compared to a house or castle, whose innermost recess contains a precious treasure, the soul. The man of the house is called Wit, which we may here translate by "judgment." He is named God's constable, and has the best will to guard the house and treasure against the robbers that invest it. Unfortunately, he has a self-willed, disobedient wife, called Will, and the servants, who do partly out-of-door and partly in-door service (the five senses—the thoughts), are hard to manage, and follow the woman rather than the master. Hence the man of the house very much needs the support of his four daughters: Prudence, Strength, Moderation, and Righteousness. The apparition of two messengers has a most beneficent influence upon the entire household; the first, whom Prudence has caused to appear, is called Fear, the messenger of Death; he paints for the members of the household a terrifying picture of hell, whence he comes. The second, whom God sends to comfort the family, is called Love of Life, the messenger of Mirth; he impressively depicts the delights of heaven, and he does it so charmingly that some of the music that fills the poet's soul seems to communicate itself to his language. The high dignity of virginity reappears in this work. Only when the heavenly choir of virgins supplicate God, does he rise from his throne, while he hears the other saints sitting. When the messenger of Mirth has finished his speech, it is resolved to retain him, but whenever he becomes silent, to take the messenger of Death into the house. The housewife and servants, however, have become very quiet and obedient; the house is now well ordered and well guarded.

Probably all the productions considered in this chapter belong to the first quarter of the thirteenth century. We may assume that they arose in the territory formed by the counties of Dorset, Wilton, and Southampton, including perhaps

[1] *Sawles Warde*, compare Morris, *Old English Homilies*, p. 245, *et seq.*

Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. As to the *Ancren Riwle*, a manuscript allusion designates Tarente, on the river Stour in Dorsetshire, as the residence of the three virgins for whom the rule was originally written. This notice, it is true, is not absolutely authentic; but it is just as little to be absolutely rejected. A clever conjecture based upon this has identified the author of that work with the learned and pious Richard Poor, who was successively dean of Salisbury, bishop of Chichester, bishop of Salisbury, and finally bishop of Durham. Born in Tarente, Richard is known as the benefactor of a nunnery there, and there his heart was entombed after his death, in 1237. However pleasing, this hypothesis leaves room for many doubts. At all events, there is no authority whatever for ascribing most of the remaining works just considered, or all of them, to the author of the *Ancren Riwle*. This work, however, was reproduced in several copies, and afterward even translated into French and Latin, and certainly did exercise a potent influence upon contemporaries as well as their immediate descendants.

XIII.

The new lyrical poetry likewise developed mainly in the South; though the midland country took some part in its growth.

The theme of the religious *Minne* here asserted itself from the start. A prayer to the Virgin, a religious love-song full of lofty enthusiasm, appeared soon after the beginning of the thirteenth century.

"Gentle mother of Christ, Saint Mary, light of my life, my dear, to thee I bow and bend my knees, and all my heart's blood I offer to thee. Thou art the light of my soul, and my heart's bliss, my life and my hope, my sure salvation."

And thus it continues. The poet outdoes himself in hyperbole; though we are once or twice reminded that only the second place in heaven falls properly to the Virgin, and the first to Christ. But, as a rule, we feel as if the Deity himself were addressed. Mary redeems from the power of the devil, she is the source of life, heaven is full of her blessedness, and the earth of her mercy. The angels never weary

of looking upon her beauty. She bestows mercy and grace upon each who supplicates her. She grants eternal rest with sweet bliss. To look upon her in her splendour is the most ardent wish of the poet. He will not leave her for all the world.

"As long as I have life and strength, nothing shall part me from thy service; before thy feet I will lie and cry out until I have forgiveness for my misdeeds. My life is thine, my love is thine, my heart's blood is thine, and if I dare say it, my dear mistress, thou art mine."[1]

The portrayal of the joys of heaven is also characteristic. Mary makes her friends rich kings, gives them princely garments, bracelets, golden rings. In heaven they shall have golden cups, and they shall be given eternal life. Mary's heavenly court is covered with cloth of gold, all wear golden crowns, and are as red as the rose and white as the lily. The poet's words kindle, because they come from enthusiasm. He has little artistic culture; his grouping and arrangement are very imperfect.

The metre is simple. Long lines are paired by end-rhyme; their character cannot easily be defined, because the poet seems to oscillate between old and new metrical principles.

Several songs, clearly betraying the influence of the *Poema morale*, may be placed in the second quarter of the century. Their metrical form is manifestly founded upon the verse of this poem, notwithstanding the great liberties which some poets took with it, perhaps under the influence of the French Alexandrines. The weightiest change, however, is the substitution of the strophe of four lines, with continuous rhyme, for the strophe of two lines. Besides the Middle Latin poetry, the French could also have given the precedent for this.

Various poetic individualities assert themselves in the handling of this form. We have, for instance, a virile, but unproductive, somewhat harsh nature in a monk of the old school, who, in a song to the Virgin,[2] bitterly laments his former worldly life. Well-known ideas from the *Poema morale* were clearly in his mind; he did not hesitate to take entire verses from it. But he produced a homogeneous

[1] V. 153, *et seq.*, Morris, *Old English Homilies*, p. 169.
[2] *A Prayer to Our Lady*, Morris, *Old English Miscellany*, p. 192, *et seq.*

poem, since he had the closest affinity with his source, and quite assimilated what he drew from it. He is much more naïve and uncultured than his model, and moves within a narrow horizon. We can but smile when he charges himself with genuine Teutonic sins, and confesses that he has

Often drunken wine, and rarely from the spring.

Quite a different personality is revealed in another song to the Virgin.[1] It strikes, in flowing verse, a more lyrical tone, and expresses gushing feeling in less popular diction. Besides some suggestions of the *Poema morale* is evident the influence of a more recent school, and Romanic words appear in important passages. Poems on Death[2] and the Last Judgment[3] breathe forth the Old English seriousness of doctrine and speculation. The former almost entirely lacks true lyrical moments. It expresses the sombre fancy which makes the departed soul speak to the corpse, and feels a horrid delight in the detailed description of the physical phenomena accompanying and following death, and in the portrayal of the torments of hell. The latter forms a well-arranged, effective picture, from a material which many poets were yet to handle.

Richer and more animated strophe-forms, in shorter verses, in imitation of the Latin hymn and the French lyric, appear at every hand. Now it is the system of the tail-rhyme *(ryme couee)*, in which the couplets of the strophe are interrupted by an isolated verse or refrain, ending always with the same sound; this form was a favourite in the ecclesiastical sequence, and it was later nationalised by the ballad-singers in England more completely than in any other part of Europe. Now the rhyming lines alternate in the manner of the courtly art, whereby the combination of the interlaced (*rime croisée*), and of the pairing rhyme (*rime plate*), enhances the effect. A more decided influence of French poetry, in the use of the latter form, makes itself felt also upon the style; we sometimes have direct imitations of Norman models. But a national influence continues to act, proceeding from the well-rounded style of the *Poema morale*, and the terse expression of simple worldly-wisdom in Aelfred's *Proverbs*.

[1] *Reliquiae antiquae*, I. 102, *et seq.* *Old Engl. Misc.*, p. 195, *et seq.*
[2] *Old Engl. Misc.*, p. 168, *et seq.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 162, *et seq.*

One of the latter furnishes the theme of an excellent poem on the transitoriness of life.[1] On the whole, we cannot fail to perceive, in this first rise of mediæval English lyrical poetry, the folk-like originality with which were utilised the incitements offered by the more recent European literature in the Latin or French language. It is evident in a certain restrained freedom in the use of the new forms, still more in the intensity, the deep seriousness, with which the new themes are conceived, and which we hear in the softer tone, the quicker *tempo* of the new melody.

The lyrical tone becomes more perfect in the new forms. It is often distinctly heard in purely reflective or didactic poetry, where the poet warns sinners and points to death and the judgment; but it appears most clearly when he sings the joys of the Virgin, or the sufferings of Christ, when he echoes the longing of spiritual love, or seeks to awaken it. Most charming of all is the note of the *Love-Song*[2] of the Franciscan Thomas de Hales, whose name is once honourably mentioned in the letters of his famous brother in the order Adam de Marisco:[3]

A maid of Christ entreateth me,
  A love-song for her to indite,
That thus she may instructed be
  To choose a lover true aright,
The best to guard a woman free,
  Of all men born, most loyal knight.
Nor shall her wish refusèd be,
  To teach her this, be my delight.

Maiden, thou mayest here behold,
  This earthly love is but a race,
And is beset so manifold,
  Is fickle, frail, with lying face.
Its servers that before were bold
  Are flown as wind without a trace,
Beneath the mould are lying cold,
  Like meadow-grass in faded place.

. . . . . .

[1] *Old Engl. Misc.*, p. 156, *et seq.*

[2] *A Luve Ron.* Incipit quidam cantus quem composuit frater Thomas de hales de ordine fratrum Minorum. ad instanciam cuiusdam puelle deo dicate. Morris, *Old Engl. Misc.*, p. 93, *et seq.*

[3] Ep. CCXXVII (to Brother Thomas of York): Salutetis, obsecro, obsequio mei specialissimos *(sic!)* patres, fratrem A. de Lexinton, fratrem Ricardum de Walda, fratrem Willielmum de Basinge, *fratrem Thomam de Hales*, et alios mihi devotos. *Monumenta Franciscana*, ed. J. S. Brewer, p. 395.

None is so rich, none is so free,
But hence he soon must take his way,
Nor can vain pomp his safeguard be,
Ermine nor gold nor broideries gay.
None is so swift that he may flee,
Nor keep off death one single day.
Thus is this world, as thou mayst see;
Thus do its shadows glide away.

A transitory world we find;
For when one comes, another goes.
What was before is now behind,
And what was dear, now hateful grows.
Therefore he walks as do the blind
Who in this world his love bestows.
The earth will vanish out of mind,
And truth come back, when error goes.

. . . . . .

Man's love but for an hour is crowned,
For now he loveth, now is sad.
Now cometh he, now hence is bound;
Now is he wroth, and now is glad.
His love, erst here, is distant found;
And now he loves what once he had.
Falseness, deceit in him abound;
Who trusteth to him, must be mad.

If man be rich in worldly weal,
His anxious heart must smart and ache.
In deepest dread that men may steal,
Long, painful nights he lieth awake.
His sighs perplexing thoughts reveal,
How he may guard his treasure's stake.
His end will help these woes to heal,
For death from him his all will take.

Paris and Helen, where are they,
Fairest in beauty, bright to view?
Amadas, Tristram, Ideine, yea,
Isold, that loved with love so true?
And Cæsar, rich in power and sway,
Hector, the strong, with might to do?
All glided from earth's realm away,
Like shaft that swift from bowstring flew.

It is as if they ne'er were here.
Their wondrous woes have been a-told,
That it is sorrow but to hear:
How anguish killed them seven-fold,

And how with dole their lives were drear.
Now is their heat all turned to cold.
Thus this world gives false hope, false fear;
A fool, who in her strength is bold.

Were man as rich, as high of birth,
As Henry[1] is, our lord and king,
As fair as Absalom, of worth
Too great to find an equalling,
Yet of his pride soon would be dearth,
At last no herring's price t'would bring.
Maid, wish no lover upon earth,
But fix thine eyes on heaven's King.

Ah, Sweet, could'st thou but know, but view,
The virtues of this Lord of light!
Fair to behold, of radiant hue,
And glad of mien, of presence bright,
Of lovesome mood, of trust all true,
Full free of heart, in wisdom right,
Never would'st thou have cause to rue,
If thou but yieldedst to his might.

His riches spread o'er field and strand,
As far as men speak aught with mouth.
All here belongeth to his hand,
From east to west, from north to south.
Henry, the king of Engeland,
His vassal is, and to him boweth.
Maiden, oh hear his sweet command,
For to thee now his love he troweth.

He asks of her neither lands nor people, neither treasure nor costly garments; he has enough of all and gives her for her love such garb as no king and no emperor possesses. His dwelling, incomparably more beautiful than any building of Solomon, has a firm foundation and will never totter. In it prevails eternal jubilee and unclouded peace; the sight of the loved one gives highest bliss. He has entrusted a jewel to his friend, surpassing all jewels in brilliancy and worth, which shines brightly in heaven's bower; this is virginity, which she shall jealously guard against every enemy. The poet has now fulfilled the wish of the virgin, and selected the best lover for her that he can find. How ill would one act who, having to choose between two, should choose the worse!

[1] Henry III. of England.

Dear maid, this rhyme I to thee send,
  Open, and without clasp or seal.
Unroll its words, to them attend;
  Learn without book for thy soul's weal.
Quickly to other maidens lend,
  Nor of its teachings aught conceal;
Thus they may con it to the end,
  And steadfast help it will reveal.

And when thou sittest sorrowing,
  Draw forth this scroll now writ by me.
With voice of sweetness do it sing,
  Keep its commands most faithfully,
For thee hath greeted heaven's King.
  May God Almighty bide with thee,
Safe to his bridal chamber bring,
  High in the heavens eternally.

We have here an art-poetry not quite developed in form, of the simplest, noblest mould, a contemplative lyric, which, springing from warm feeling, moves calmly and quietly, without subtlety of reflection or trifling with forms, in euphonious, richly figurative speech. The poet is quite within the culture of his time; he has poetical ideas at his command, and possesses the lyrical ear and fancy. He has evidently not yet learned to be concise, and when he sings the praise of virginity, he lavishes, as was usual in such cases, too many names of jewels, whose enumeration we have spared the reader.

XIV.

The distinctions between the religious song and poetical reflection, or even the sermon, in that epoch, are imperceptible. Only by degrees did specific literary types gain definite form in the growing artistic development, or given sets of material become connected with given forms. Men long grope for the right, and only the happy instinct finds it. The central point of a circle of ideas is, indeed, unmistakable. The direct expression of subjective feeling cannot be confounded with a speech intended to instruct a certain audience.

For even the true sermon disguised itself often enough in the vesture of rhythm, as in Aelfric's time. Let us enter the over-crowded church, where a monk in grey cowl stands

in the pulpit, and sharply addresses the conscience of his somewhat dazed hearers. He makes hell hot for them all in turn.

All those deceiving chapmen, the devil yet will get them.
The bakers and the brewers, to cheat all men do set them;
They hold low down the gallon, and then with foam they fill.
And out of each man's purse, its silver quick they spill.
And very poor they make their bread and eke their ale;
For if they take the silver in, they never tell a tale.
Good people, for God's love, believe, such things are sin,
And at the last will lose you the heaven you would win.
All the wives of priests shall then, I wot, be most forlorn,
And of the priests themselves, all sins shall not be borne,
Nor of those proud young men that love their Malekin,
Nor yet those maidens bold that dote on Janekin.
At church and at the market, when they together rove,
They quickly gather whispering and speak of secret love.
When to the church they come on any holy day,
Each one but goes to see his love there, if he may.
Then she beholdeth Watkin, as glad as she can be,
But home she leaves her rosary, locked up full carefully.
For masses and for matins she certainly cares nought;
To Wilkin and to Watkin, she gives her every thought.[1]

The ecclesiastical epic was likewise adapted to oral delivery, in church or open air, or in a large room in cloister or castle. "Hear a little story which I will tell to you, as we find it written in the Gospel. It is not of Charlemagne and the twelve peers, but of Christ's passion which he suffered here."[2] Thus begins a rhythmical account of the passion, with nice adjustment, combining the facts given by the evangelists into a sober, somewhat terse narrative, now and then broken by brief reflection or exclamation. To the passion is appended an account of the resurrection, perhaps from another pen, but resembling it in style and tendency. A short narrative of Christ's meeting with the Samaritan is complete in itself; it gives no direct evidence that it was intended for oral delivery.

One form predominates in all these poems. The verse oscillates between the Old French Alexandrine and the septenarius, so that it approaches very near to the Anglo-Norman Alexandrines of a Jordan Fantosme. But the English verse in more than one respect betrays the after-effect of the

[1] Morris, *Old Eng. Misc.*, p. 189.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

ancient native long line. As in many French poems of the time and class, there is a disposition to make a strophic division. The strophe, as a rule, includes four or six lines, which, however, do not require like rhymes, as with the French.

Besides this metre, the short couplet occurs in the religious epic and descriptive poetry, and precisely that form of it which we first found in the *Paternoster*. This form is handled very skilfully by the poet of an English *Visio Pauli;* or, as the superscription in the manuscript runs, *Ici comencent les onze peynes de enfern. les queus seynt pool v*(ist),[1] "here commence the eleven pains of hell, which Saint Paul saw." Yet strangely enough, the acting, that is to say, the observing or narrating personage of the poem is not Saint Paul, but a great sinner who has dwelt in hell, not only as a guest but as an inhabitant, and is brought back to life by God's omnipotence. Satan meets him on earth, and asks with indignant astonishment, "Wretched ghost, what dost thou here? Thou wast my companion in hell. Who has unlocked hell's door that thou hast fled the pain?" "Wilt thou hear from me, Satan, how I have escaped from hell? Worms gnawed my flesh, and my friends forgot me. I was a man, as thou well knowest, and now I am a wretched ghost. I have been long in hell; that may one see in my hue. Man may take an example of me who would forsake his sins. To his misfortune he was born, who was lost on account of his sins. For the man who so acts that his soul goes to hell, shall suffer more pains than there are birds flying under heaven." An account of the hell torments then follows, in the well-known eleven rubrics; it essentially agrees with the usual version of what St. Paul saw under the guidance of Michael. National literature[2] first took up this material in France, and our English poem decidedly points to a French model. The translator even left, in the original language, the opening, the close, and a third passus; in short, all the passages in which the poet speaks in the first person.[3]

[1] Morris, *Old Engl. Misc.*, p. 147.

[2] To say "national poetry" instead of "national literature" would have been more correct; for English homiletics had used this material as early as, if not earlier than, French poetry.

[3] Of these three passages, only the closing verses are translated, and with amplification. If the translation thus added is not partially or entirely the work of a transcriber, the English poet's name was Hug.

The proverb-poetry of the period was but little affected by foreign art. It frequently yields notes from the ancient national poetry, as in the following example:

When thou seest a people
With king that is wilful,
Covetous judge,
Priest that is wild,
Bishop of sloth,
Old men of lewdness,
Young men all liars,
Women shameless,
Unbridled children,
The nobles bad wretches,
The land without law,
Then, says Beda,
Woe to the nation.[1]

A theme often recurring, and in manifold variation, is contained in the following saying:

Each day to me come tidings three,
Of which I think full sorrowingly.
One is that hence I must away;
Another, I know not the day;
The third is my soul's greatest care:
I know not whither I shall fare.[2]

The plain form of the short couplet very properly predominates in the proverbs. Alternate rhyme is the exception.

In this connection we may appropriately mention a poem which is steeped with popular proverbial wisdom: *The Owl and the Nightingale.* Representing the highest contemporary art, this poem diverges, in many unique qualities, from the southern art-poetry, to which it belongs, in language and locality, first, in the subject, which is not religious, and not less in its purely national colour and original treatment. This betokens the man of polite culture, and the scholar; but nowhere does the ecclesiastic become prominent in its noble, simple, and popular tone. The question arises, if the author was not a merry, half-ecclesiastical, half-secular wandering cleric, a student of many years' standing, one who, perhaps, had long studied at Oxford. The time had come when these *clerkes*, who, for several centuries, had composed

[1] Morris, *Old Engl. Misc.*, p. 185. Compare also the Old English homily *de XII abusivis*, as analysed by Dietrich, *Zeitschrift für historische Theologie*, 1855, p. 518, *et seq.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

in Latin, were to turn to the national art. The deep seriousness beneath his cheerful humour indicates that the author was a mature man. The wandering cleric had possibly, several years before, laid aside the pilgrim's staff, and accepted a living, perhaps in Dorset or an adjacent county. For the Master Nicholas of Guildford, whom he so highly reveres, dwells in Porteshom, in Dorsetshire, and he it is whom the heroines choose as an arbiter in their dispute.

This dispute between the owl and the nightingale forms the subject-matter of the poem. It is the first instance in the English language of the contests in verse, already long current in French literature. They appeared first in the poetry of the troubadours, as true poetical controversies between two opponents; later, among the North French, who had been preceded by Middle Latin poets in this, in the form of debates between different classes personified, or different animals, between water and wine, body and soul, sometimes in dramatic, sometimes in epic form. As direct dialogue, these *desbats*, *estrifs*, *disputoisons*, or whatever they may be called, were important in the development of the drama.

The form of *The Owl and the Nightingale* is epic. It is the poet who relates the occurrence, having been present, unseen, at the dispute.

The nightingale picks the quarrel. Sitting upon a flowering twig in the close hedge, she is disturbed in her sweet singing by the sight of the owl upon an old ivy-grown trunk near by, and abuses her in harsh and contemptuous language. The owl waits until evening, and then duly responds. The ice is broken, and a flood of speeches and retorts in attack and defence follows, with occasional pauses. Each criticises the nature, manner of life, and especially the singing of her opponent, and brings forward her own good qualities. It is the old conflict between beauty, brilliancy, youth, cheerfulness, and a serious, gloomy, sullen old age, between pleasure and asceticism. Singularly enough, the poet seems to side with the owl, notwithstanding his very impersonal attitude. What phase of the contrast, what strife raging in his time and vicinity, did the poet have in mind? For it is the remoter background, the veiled purpose naturally looked for, that attracts us in this poem. The modern reader un-

consciously thinks of the opposition of the court-party and the barons. But the poet did not conceive the matter thus generally. He must have had in view definite persons and relations in church or state. Yet his concern extends far beyond personal issues and party strife. It embraces life and nature, with warm and liberal sympathy. The æsthetic side of his view is represented by the nightingale, the moral by the owl; yet the nightingale, too, would promote ethical or religious aims, and within this very field does her view of life serve to supplement and correct the reverse phase. The nightingale says:

Thou askest me, Owl, she said, whether I can do anything but sing during the summer tide, and bring bliss far and wide. Why askest thou of my gifts? Better is my one than all of thine. Better is one song, from my mouth, than all thy kind could ever do. And listen, I will tell thee wherefore: dost thou know for what man was born? For the bliss of the kingdom of heaven; there ever is song and mirth without ceasing. Thither tendeth every man who can do anything good. Hence it is that men sing in the holy church, and clerks make songs; so that man may think by the song of the place, whither he shall go, to be there long; so that he may not forget joy, but think thereof and attain it, and may perceive, in the voice of the church, how merry is the heavenly bliss. Clerks, monks, and canons rise at midnight and sing of the light of heaven, and priests sing in the country when the light of day springs. And I help them what I may, I sing with them night and day, and through me they are all the gladder, and the readier for song. I admonish men for their good, that they be blithe in their mood, and bid them that they may seek the song that is eternal.[1]

The owl responds as follows:

Thou sayest that thou singest to mankind and teachest them to tend to the song that lasts forever. It is the greatest of all wonders that thou darest lie so openly. Dost thou think they so easily come into God's kingdom, all singing? No, no, they will feel that they must get forgiveness of their sins by long weeping, before they may ever come there. Therefore, I advise that men be ready, and more weep than sing they who strive for the presence of the Heavenly King. There is no man without sin. For this he must repent with tears and weeping, ere he go hence, so that what was sweet before become sour to him. I help him in that, God knows. I sing him no follies; for all my song is of longing and mingled with whining. . . . . If right goes forth and wrong goes back—better is my weeping than all thy singing.[2]

[1] *Owl and Nightingale*, 707–742. The passage recalls Alexander Neckam, *De naturis rerum*, I. c. 41, (*De Philomena*): Quid quod noctes tota ducit insomnes, dum delicioso garritui pervigil indulget? Nonne jam vitam claustralium prae oculis cordis constituis, noctes cum diebus in laudem divinam expendentium?

[2] 849–878.

Many are the arguments and views brought forward by the two opponents, and with a skill and acumen reminding us that we are in an epoch when jurists and lawyers quickly rose to great influence, wealth, and position, a time when Bracton wrote his book on the laws and customs of England. Both are fond of popular turns. Many proverbs are brought to bear, and always with the citation of Aelfred's authority; though the pseudo-Aelfredian collection which we have offers hardly any duplicate passages. Many popular traditions (also recorded, it is true, in learned works) are either mentioned or their existence assumed. Interesting is the charge made by the owl against the nightingale, that she has seduced the wife of a knight to adultery, for which the husband has taken bitter revenge. The nightingale responds that she has only consoled a wife confined by a jealous husband, and that, for the wrong done her (the nightingale) by the knight, King Henry has given her glorious satisfaction, God be merciful to his soul. The narrative in Alexander Neckam is the same, if we except the punishment of the knight by the king.[1]

The disputants naturally reach no conclusion. The nightingale finally gathers a great number of song-birds about her, and they adjudge her the victory. Their jubilation irritates the owl beyond measure; it looks as if the disputants are about to pass from words to blows. Then the wren reminds them of the king's peace, and the decision made at the beginning, to let "Maister Nichole" settle the dispute, is reconsidered. All unite in his praise. The manner in which his virtues, his justice, prudence, and wisdom are dwelt upon, makes it impossible to regard him as the poet himself, because such self-laudation would ill agree with those qualities. But there is no doubt that the poet could take the outlines of the portrait of Master Nicholas from his own character, and that he depicts himself in his friend. Perhaps the passage especially applies to him, according to which Master Nicholas had formerly been dissolute, and had liked the nightingale and "other gentle and small creatures,"

[1] *De naturis rerum*, I. c. 41: Sed o dedecus! quid meruit nobilis volucrum praecentrix, instar Hippolyti Thesidae equis diripi? Miles enim quidam nimis zelotes philomenam quatuor equis distrahi praecepit, eo quod secundum ipsius assertionem animum uxoris suae nimis demulcens, eam ad illiciti amoris compulisset illecebras.

but had since become staid, and would in nowise let himself be led into wrong by old love.[1]

The relations of the poet and his poem to the political parties and events of his time will perhaps one day be revealed. Mature study of linguistic and literary conditions leads us to assign the poem to the reign of Henry III. (1216–1272); however discordant with this theory the fact may seem that Henry II. is merely designated as "King Henri, Jesus his soule do merci."[2]

In this connection, the question rises, whether some of the religious lyrics considered in the last chapter did not come from the hand of the same poet. We lack materials for a decisive answer. But few of the songs extant could quite correspond to the personality of the man as we know him from the *Owl and the Nightingale.* He certainly had lyrical talent. His smooth, melodious versification, his copious and redundant language, his frequent musical repetition of phrase and theme, betoken a poet who well knew how to make a strophic song. He employs the short couplet, the metre used by the author of the *Eleven Pains of Hell;* no one has constructed it better than he, and scarcely any before Gower more regularly.

He is certainly the equal of the best lyrists of the epoch. In his, as in their verse, dwells a peculiar charm. This poetry is comparable to a maiden who returns to the parental house which she forsook as a child. Joyous in her foreign training and experience, she nevertheless thinks of her childhood again, and unconsciously practises many a former habit, many a long-forgotten pastime. So the English muse, having scarcely outgrown the Norman school, returned to her ancestral home and contemplated the past.

XV.

When we perceive extraordinary intellectual activity, we inquire into its causes. What conditions led to the rise of English literature under Henry III.? The growth of national feeling was perhaps the most essential agency, and this presupposes a closing of the gap between Norman and native.

As early as the reign of Henry II. this blending process

[1] *Owl and Nightingale*, 202, *et seq.*
[2] *Ibid.*, 1091, *et seq.*

had gone so far that the *Dialogus de scaccario*[1] says it was well nigh impossible to distinguish among the free-men, the man of English from the man of Norman blood. This was, however, in great part a passage of the English element into the Norman, rather than the reverse. Though many spoke both languages, yet the use of Norman-French remained for a long time a sign of aristocratic descent. And as the history of the literature attests, the fusion cannot have gone on equally in the entire extent of the kingdom. Hence it is well to interpret with care the words of the author of the *Dialogue*.

This fusion made great progress during the reign of the sons and the grandson of the second Henry.

Normandy was lost under King John, and the immigrated aristocracy of England was cut off from the mother-country. The separation was made complete by a measure taken, with the same political motives, by Henry III. and Louis IX. They decreed that no subject of one crown should possess land upon the territory of the other.

Disturbance in domestic politics also had its influence. The weakness and incapacity of Kings John and Henry III. had made them dependent upon South French favourites. This roused the jealousy of the haughty Norman barons, as much as the absolutist tendencies of those kings provoked to opposition their proud sense of freedom. In the struggle between crown and aristocracy, the hatred of the English race for absolutism, its abhorrence of the audacious acts of the Gascons, made it a natural ally of the aristocracy.

The necessity of securing this ally was clearly seen, under Henry III., by a man whose South French birth seemed to predestine him for a member of the court-party, but who became the leader and the soul of the popular party, and who, almost adored during his lifetime, was revered as a martyr after his death,—by Simon de Montfort. It is significant of the situation of affairs, that all the strictly political literature of the time in England, both in Latin and French, sides with the barons against the king and the court-party. The best spirits of the country stood for the cause of freedom; the pious and learned bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste, and the famous Franciscan, Adam of Marsh (de

[1] I. 10. Stubbs's *Select Charters*, p. 201, *et seq.*

Marisco), were both by close friendship united to Simon de Montfort.

The opposition was heightened by the intervention of the papal curia. The interests of Romish politics had long been hostile to the English crown, but in those days they seemed entirely to coincide with them. This complication of ecclesiastical and secular interests, however, only made the papacy appear to the most ecclesiastically disposed Englishmen as the enemy that menaced their dearest possessions.

Political tension in England reached its utmost in the middle of the thirteenth century, the boundary between the literary period which we have tried to sketch, and that upon which we now enter.

The poems that last occupied us bloomed in the ominous calm that precedes a tempest.

Soon after the middle of the century, in 1258, the storm broke. Events followed in quick succession, first in politics, and then in war. We see men of Norman and English blood united in the struggle for ancient folk-rights; we see the beginnings of the modern English constitution forming from the Old English constitution, whose spirit still breathed in the Norman feudal state; and by the side of the Upper House, we already discern the outlines of the House of Commons.

English speech attained, amid this commotion, an importance that raised it, at least for a time, to the dignity of a language of state and government. On the 18th of October, 1258, King Henry, under the influence of ministers and councillors imposed upon him by the barons, issued a proclamation "to all his faithful, learned and laymen"; this was published simultaneously in the French and English languages. A French copy of general import is preserved; of the English version, the copies destined for the counties of Huntingdon and Oxford have reached us.

All documents written after this time down to Richard III. seem to have been composed exclusively in Latin or French, the French gradually gaining the precedence. But this makes the exceptional phenomenon of the year 1258 all the more significant, since it shows to what importance the English element had even then risen.

The growth of the national literature was as little retarded

by the continued use of foreign languages in official documents and political affairs, as was the steady, though slow, progress of the English constitution arrested by violent and prolonged reactions. The wealth of the nation increased with the growth of freedom; indeed, the former was a condition of the latter. The great cities, where commerce and industry flourished, became the centres of political progress, the schools in which the nation learned self-government. London was no less conspicuous for its wealth than for the free spirit of its citizens. Trade grew enormously. Aided by the expanding scope of navigation, it came to include all European coasts in its range. Stirring life prevailed at the harbours; strange costumes and languages, foreign products, costly stuffs, aroused the interest and admiration of the countryman visiting the neighbouring port. But what, perhaps, most moved his wonder, was the wealth and luxury of the burghers, who began gradually to emulate the gentlefolk in dress and mode of life, who liked to be called *sire*, and were wont to intersperse their speech with French words.

BOOK III.

FROM LEWES TO CRECY.

Noch einmal sattelt mir den Hippogryphen, ihr Musen,
Zum Ritt in's alte romantische Land.

WIELAND.

I

Times of great political excitement, especially times of civil war, are wont to leave their stamp on language. In the reign of Henry III., English, with the exception of the southeastern dialect, cast off the marks peculiar to the transition from the ancient to the middle age. An important revolution took place in the vocabulary; foreign elements, or new formations and new application of native material crowded out much of the old stock. In syntax, new losses of inflection were finally brought about by the intrusion of a simpler, more logical arrangement of words. These changes went hand in hand with the increasing importance of English as a language of daily intercourse and of literature. Gradually as the Anglo-Norman lost its purity, together with its dominant position, it yielded more and more of its own wealth to the English. It was long, however, before the spirit of the English completely permeated the foreign matter, and became assimilated with it. Many agencies seemed to bring Englishman and Norman into contact; such as the growing needs of life in business and in family intercourse; the sway of fashion in dress; court life and chivalry, to which France still gave the tone; new discoveries and methods in the industrial and fine arts; the clergy; the itinerant monks; the cosmopolitan orders. Of the latter, the Franciscans were especially notable; they came, in the beginning at least, into closest contact with the poor of the larger cities. A great part in this intercourse was also taken by the *disours*, *harpours*, *gestours*, or as they were called in pure English "seggers" and "glee-men." It was they who made the French romantic literature, translated either by themselves or by others, accessible to the English people. The circle of their audience grew wider from year

to year. The highest spheres of society still much preferred French to English poetry. But there were the rich burgess, the comfortable freeholder, the knight with his squires and his yeomen, perhaps also many a one of higher degree; and finally, if the minstrel was not fastidious, a great throng of meaner folk in town and country were eager to hear him.

Epic poetry again came into literature at about the middle of the thirteenth century.

By that time its florescence in France was already past. The various forms and species of the epic there had followed each other in rapid succession: the national epos and the rhapsody of the *jongleur*, the chivalric court-romance, the cycles of the antique and the Breton world, the national epopee of the *trouvères*. Nearly all these materials and forms still lived in oral tradition, or in literature, but the sinews of production were paralysed. During the last half of the century, in the extreme north of the range of the French language, chivalric poetry once more revived in the works of an Adenet; but the virtuosity in rhyme-making, carried to excess in his works, and joined with great sentimentality and a perceptible lack of creative power, clearly reveals the features of epigonic poetry. A new spirit had awakened in France, the spirit of satire and denial of the mediæval view of life. This had created an epic art-form, which had grown from the plan of the court-romance by the saturation of the latter with antique reminiscences and themes. Jehan de Meun, the Rabelais of his time, wrote, during the latter part of St. Louis's reign, his cynical continuation of the *Romance of the Rose*, commenced, in the spirit of a mediæval Ovid, by Guillaume de Lorris, at the beginning of the century.

In England, the time of conflict with the Middle Ages had not yet arrived. Mediæval romanticism had yet to win a place in the national literature. But culture developed there on a broader civil basis. The burgher element was predominant in that society, whose attention the singers of chivalric poetry had first to gain. And when the opposition between races and tongues had disappeared in the nation, it was plainly shown how much more easily the barrier separating the aristocracy from the commonalty could be surmounted, and how much less reason the classes had for mutual enmity

than in France. The old element and the new were more congenial in England than elsewhere, because the old was really old and was permeated by the Teutonic spirit.

The time of the English folk-epos had long gone; its last echoing sounds were silent. A certain substitute was found in new popular sagas and songs, as those of *Horn* and of *Havelok*, which were probably written down towards the beginning of the period.

King Horn is preserved in a form plainly recalling the musical recital with which it had once been presented, and it is not the words of the poem alone that prove it to be a song:

> Be of good cheer, all who listen to my singing.
> A song I will sing you of Murry[1] the king.[2]

There is an unmistakably strophic construction in the text as we have it, though the division is unequal, and many passages of the poem have a thoroughly musical charm. The elementary unit of the strophe, as it here appears, the short couplet, is formed entirely on the Teutonic principle, with two accents upon the sonorous close of the verse, so that it appears to be an organic continuation of the chief form in Laȝamon and in Aelfred's *Proverbs*. This circumstance makes the poem exceptional among the early English romances.

The *Song of Horn* must be counted as a metrical romance, in view of its contents, its structure, its dress, and mounting. The age of romantic chivalry distinctly left its impress upon the material derived from an obscure transition period.

Horn is the son of King Murry, or Allof, of South Daneland and of Queen Godhild. He excels all the children of men in beauty. Twelve noble youths are given him as companions, and among them are two whom he loves better than all others: Athulf, the best of all, and the traitor, Fikenhild.

On a summer's day the king rides, as usual, along the strand, when he perceives that fifteen ships have landed there,

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[1] Murry, according to another reading, Allof, the father of Horn.

[2] Alle beon he blithe
That to my song lythe:
A sang ihc schal you singe
Of Murry the kinge. *King Horn*, 1–4.

We use the text of Mätzner's *Sprachproben*, but take the liberty of replacing ancient characters by more modern ones.

manned by Saracens. A contest ensues; Murry falls, with the two knights who accompanied him. The pagans swarm into the country, destroy the churches, and massacre all who refuse to abjure their faith. Godhild escapes their rage by hiding in a cave. Horn's beauty so touches the pagan king that he does not suffer him to die by the sword, but, with his twelve companions, sets him adrift at the mercy of the wind and the waves.

The sea began to flow and Horn child to row, the sea drove the ship so fast that the children were afraid. They saw a sure fate before them all day and all night, till the daylight sprang, till Horn upon the strand saw men walking on the land. "Comrades," he spoke, "youths, I will tell you tidings. I hear birds sing and see the grass spring. Let us be blithe in life, our ship is on shore." They left the ship and set foot on the ground. At the sea-side they let that ship ride. Then spake child Horn—in South Daneland was he born: "Ship in the flood, have thou good days. At the brink of the sea, let no waters drown thee. If thou comest to South Daneland, greet well my kin, greet thou well my mother Godhild, the good queen, and say to the heathen king, the opposer of Jesus Christ, that I am whole and hale, arrived in this land, and say that he shall feel the stroke of my hand."[1]

The youths meet the king, Ailmar of Westernesse, who receives them with kindness and addresses Horn thus: "Enjoy thou well thy name, Horn, sound loud over hill and dale, resound over valley and down. So shall thy name spring from king to king, and thy beauty through all Westernesse, the strength of thy hand through every land." Ailmar delivers Horn to his steward Athelbrus, to be educated. He is to be taught to hunt and to fish, to play the harp, to carve, and to serve the cup before the king. Horn grows

[1] The se bigan to flowe,
And Horn child to rowe,
The se that schup so faste drof,
The children dradde therof.
Hi wenden to wisse
Of here lif to misse,
Al the day and al the night,
Til hit (hem?) sprang day light,
Til Horn sagh on the stronde
Men gon in the londe.
"Feren," quath he, "yonge,
Ihc telle you tithinge,
Ihc here fogheles singe,
And se that gras him springe.
Blithe beo we on lyue,
Ure schup is on ryue."
Of schup hi gunne funde,
And setten fot to grunde,
Bi the se side
Hi leten that schup ride.
Thanne spak him child Horn,
In Suddene he was iborn:
"Schup, bi the se flode
Daies haue thu gode:
Bi the se brinke
No water the nadrinke:
Yef thu cume to Suddene,
Gret thu wel of myne kenne,
Gret thu wel my moder,
Godhild quen the gode,
And seie the paene kyng,
Jesu Cristes witherling,
That ich am hol and fer
On this lond ariued her:
And seie that he schal fonde
Thc dent of myne honde."
V. 117–152.

tall under the care of Athelbrus, and gains the love of all at the court and outside of it, but most of all he is loved by Rymenhild, the king's daughter. Very desirous to speak to the youth alone, she feigns sickness and commands Athelbrus to come into her chamber with Horn. This command puts Athelbrus into great embarrassment. He neither dares to obey nor to disobey. He therefore makes a compromise, and brings Athulf instead of Horn. Rymenhild, deceived in the subdued light of her chamber, loads Athulf with caresses, until he makes clear her mistake. All her anger is now directed against Athelbrus, who can only avert the storm by promising to send Horn to her. Horn betakes himself to Rymenhild, and kneels before her; the apartment is illumined by his beauty. A tender scene follows, in which the maid sues for the love of the youth. But Horn declares himself unworthy to woo the king's daughter. There is only one thing that can make him worthy of her; she must help him to become a knight. They resolve to work for this object through the intercession of Athelbrus with the king. The plan succeeds. Ailmar makes Horn a knight, whereupon the latter gives the accolade to his twelve comrades. Rymenhild, with rejoicing, now receives her lover, who, adorned with his new dignity, steps into the room with Athulf. But Horn has come only to bid her farewell. Before he makes her his wife, he wishes to deserve her by knightly deeds. Rymenhild resigns herself to her fate.

"Knight," spoke she, "faithful one, I ween I can believe thee; take thou this golden ring. Good is its adornment, upon the ring is graved, 'Rymenhild the young;' there is no better one under the sun. . . . . Wear it for my love, and bear it on thy finger. The stones thereupon have such virtue that thou wilt dread no blow in any place, neither wilt thou be dismayed in battle when thou lookest upon it and thinkest of thy beloved. And Sir Athulf, thy brother, shall have another. Horn, I beseech with loving speech that Christ give good intercession for us, and bring thee back again."[1]

The new knight has immediate occasion to test the magic power of the ring. He owes to it a glorious victory over a horde of Saracens just landed, and expecting to conquer the

[1] V. 561–582.

realm of Ailmar. After he has vanquished the enemy, he carries into Ailmar's hall, on the point of his sword, the head of their leader. Thus fate seems to favour the lovers; but an anxious dream fills the heart of Rymenhild with sad forebodings, only too soon to be fulfilled. Fikenhild reveals to the king the secret his jealousy has discovered. Ailmar surprises the youth in the arms of Rymenhild, and wrathfully banishes him from the kingdom. The parting of the lovers is very mournful: "Darling love," says Horn, "now is thy dream fulfilled. . . . Farewell, Rymenhild, longer I dare not stay. I go to a strange country, and shall dwell there full seven years. If I come not again at the end of seven years, or send thee no message, take a husband and wait no longer for me. Fold me into thine arms, and kiss me long." The seven years of banishment are filled with adventures and deeds of heroism, over which we will not linger. The period nears its close, and Rymenhild lives in great anxiety. A mighty king, Modi of Reynes, sues for her hand; the day of the wedding is fixed by him and Ailmar. In her trouble, Rymenhild sends out a messenger for Horn, who at last finds him in Ireland, where, by the name of Cutberd, he lives at the court of King Thurston. Horn now hastens to Westernesse, accompanied by Irish knights. When they have landed, he leaves his followers behind and proceeds alone. He hears from a pilgrim that the wedding has already taken place. He changes clothes with the pilgrim, and betakes himself to the castle where Rymenhild dwells, not having yet become the wife of Modi. He enters with great difficulty. The scene of recognition is dramatically portrayed. The rest may be imagined. Rymenhild is rescued from Modi and espoused by Horn.

But the story is not finished. Horn is impelled to leave his young wife's arms, and to go to his home. He wishes to avenge his father's death and to regain South Daneland. By the help of his Irish warriors and the faithful Athulf, he accomplishes this. He has even the unexpected joy of finding still alive his mother, who has all this time lived hidden in a cave.

In the mean time a new danger threatens Rymenhild. The theme of the Modi-episode is repeated. This time it is the traitor Fikenhild who has succeeded in gaining a great

following in Westernesse, and who has built a strong castle in the sea. Thither he carries by force the wailing Rymenhild, and tries to compel her to be his wife. But, warned by a dream, Horn returns at the decisive moment. His ship lies at anchor at the foot of the tower containing Rymenhild's chamber. The castle and its inhabitants are unknown to Horn. He is informed of the state of things by a nephew of Athulf, Arnoldin. Quickly resolved, he and several of his companions disguise themselves, and,

> They stepped over the gravel to the castle. They began merrily to sing and to play. Rymenhild heard it, and asked who they were. They answered that they were harpers, and some of them fiddlers. They let Horn in at the portal of the hall. He seated himself upon the bench, and began to play the harp. He sang before Rymenhild, and she answered with wailings. Rymenhild fell in a swoon; none laughed then. Bitter pain smote Horn's heart. He looked upon his ring, and thought of Rymenhild; he stepped to the board, and with the edge of his good sword, he struck off Fikenhild's head, and he overthrew all his warriors, one after another. When they were killed, he caused Fikenhild to be torn in pieces.[1]

Now are rewarded the faithful followers, for whom sufficient crowns are at command. Horn himself returns to South Daneland and makes Rymenhild his queen.

It is plain that this is a *roman d'aventures*, which, however, does not belie its peculiar origin. Many a trait in *King Horn* recalls a time anterior to the Conquest. Indeed, the subject-matter, taken as a whole, points to an epoch when the Danish piracies were at their height; and why should the germ of the saga not be more ancient still? But the primitive relations had, in the lapse of time, all been obliterated. The sea-robbers became Saracens in the age of the crusades; new traditions were added to more ancient legends, and the ethnology as well as the geography of the poem grew inextricably involved. So much is clear: the North Sea and its neighbouring waters, and their shores, were the scene of the action.

The influence of the age of chivalric poetry upon manners and culture is unmistakable. Considerable space is devoted to a tender love-story, which, indeed, forms the nucleus of the fable. The code of gallantry, however, seems to be but little developed, and of the lovers, it is the maid who languishes and woos.

[1] V. 1465–1492.

The narrative of Horn, a prince glowing in beauty and knightly virtue, seems, finally, to be the product of a society not yet quite at the height of courtly refinement, but still influenced by more modern culture, and containing aristocratic elements. Perhaps we may seek the home of the English song in the southern part of the country. It is hardly by chance that the dialect of the most ancient edition points to the region of Essex.

The story of *Havelok the Dane* takes us to a more northern region. Both saga and poem may have originated in a Danish colony in Lincolnshire. Unlike *King Horn*, *Havelok* has not come to us as a song. The text before us presupposes non-musical delivery by a *segger*, who, in more than one place, addresses his audience in his own behalf. Like the Anglo-Norman *Lai de Havelok*, the English poem is composed of couplets not arranged in strophes of the kind occurring in the *Owl and the Nightingale*, but, like that *lai*, it may rest on more ancient songs.

The story of Havelok and Goldburgh (Goldeboru), in many ways recalls that of Horn and Rymenhild, but the points of difference are significant.

The story of the hero and the heroine is parallel up to the point where they are brought together. Goldburgh is the daughter of the good and just English king Athelwold; Havelok is the son of the king Birkabeyn of Denmark. Before his death, Athelwold gives his kingdom and daughter, in trust, to the count of Cornwall, Godrich, with the commission to marry Goldburgh to the most beautiful and strongest man he can find. Birkabeyn likewise puts Havelok and his two sisters into the care of the Count Godard. Godrich and Godard are both black traitors, who try to become masters of the kingdoms entrusted to their guardianship. Godrich holds Goldburgh captive at Dover; Godard kills the two girls with his own hand, and commits Havelok to Grim, a fisherman, with the command to throw him into the sea. Of course, Grim does not fulfil this behest. A marvellous light that surrounds the sleeping boy teaches Grim that he has before him the true heir to the Danish crown. The fisherman prepares a ship, which he boards with his wife and children—three sons and two daughters—and puts to sea with the prince. They land at the mouth of the Hum-

ber, at a place still bearing Grim's name, Grimsby. Here the fisherman follows his old calling. The breaking out of a famine causes Havelok, who has meanwhile grown to manhood, to leave his poor foster-father in order to provide for himself. He wanders to Lincoln, where he is taken into service by the cook of the count of Cornwall. The prince gains a certain popularity in his narrow circle, on account of his tremendous bodily strength and his good-nature. He soon finds opportunity to appear upon a larger stage. At a festival he, by the cook's command, takes part in the games, and throws the stone farther than any one else. The renown of his strength comes to the ears of Godrich, who, with bitter irony, affects to find in him the man who is to marry Goldburgh. Havelok is certainly the strongest of all. By this marriage, Goldburgh will be degraded and forever excluded from the throne. Godrich carries out his purpose, against the will of the two concerned. The marriage is concluded. But with the help of a vision, Goldburgh soon recognises Havelok's kingly descent by the marvellous light which proceeds from his mouth, as well as by a red cross on his shoulder. It may already be foreseen by what stages the story is carried to a happy ending. The scene is transferred to Denmark. A faithful vassal is not wanting there, the good Count Ubbe, who knows the prince by his token, and helps him collect followers to overthrow and punish Godard. The story then follows the Danish troops to England, where it closes with the conquest and punishment of Godrich, and the recompense of faithful servants. Reward and punishment are dealt out with no sparing hand. Godard is flayed, dragged at the tail of an old mare over rough ground to the gallows, and hanged. Godrich dies by fire. Grim's daughters—the father having long since died—are married to counts, among them a newly-fledged count of Cornwall in the person of the cook Bertram, Havelok's former master. The good Danish Count Ubbe receives Denmark in fief from Havelok. Havelok himself is crowned at London with Goldburgh, and they live and reign happily for sixty years. Their marriage is blessed by fifteen children, who all become kings or queens.

In *Havelok* we have firm geographical soil to stand upon; but, as in *King Horn*, the bridge is lacking to connect the

personages and events of the fable with history, or with the ancient saga,—at least, a bridge upon which we may trust ourselves. Traces of the ancient relations between Denmark and England are plainly discernible. The story, whose memory is still preserved in the seal of Grimsby city, may have arisen among Danish settlers in Lincolnshire—who can say from what elements? It would be hard to decide how old it is, but it was probably not completed until after the time of Cnut the Great. At the end of the tale, Denmark and England are at peace, and a Danish king rules over England.

The opinion is evident throughout the poem that education and manners are on a lower plane in Denmark than in England. Public insecurity in Havelok's country is remarkably great. Quite irrelevantly to the story, not less than sixty thieves break into the house of Bernard Brown, where Havelok and Goldburgh sleep, and Count Ubbe sees no other way of guarding the English guests from further attacks than by taking them into his own castle and carefully watching over them.

The whole poem of *Havelok* presupposes but little social refinement. It differs from *King Horn* by its blunt, almost rude, popular tone. The good-natured giant Havelok, who, though a king's son, performs menial services, presents an ideal which must have powerfully attracted a subjugated Teutonic population, and in whose portrayal many a trait may have been added from the life of English outlaws. The diction of the poem of *Havelok* also shows that it appealed to a class of less gentility.

II.

The more truly literary work of translating and working over French and Anglo-Norman romances began as early as the reign of Henry III. Under Edward I. and his successor this new branch of literature took a quick impetus; production grew to an incredible extent. It was as if the full cornucopia of romantic poesy had been shaken out over the English people. As from a cornucopia everything streams in motley disorder, so the English seized at random the rich treasures of French poetry, bringing forth

what was valuable or worthless, ancient or modern, popular or courtly, in order to adapt it for the home public. No organic relation between form and matter, such as we find in the French epic, existed in these English imitations. The *chanson de geste* was not handled differently from the *roman d'aventures*, nor the romance of *Alexander* otherwise than the romances of the Arthurian cycle. The only question considered was that of the interest, or romantic nature of the material. In other respects the imitator followed his model as closely as he could, save in the alterations and additions made out of regard for the taste of his auditors.

The poet did not always recite his own work. Frequently he was a cleric and gave his poem to some *segger*, who made his fortune from it. With favourite subjects, competition sometimes called forth more than one version. Parts of different renderings were welded together by necessity or accident. The *segger* himself oftentimes felt the throbbing of a poetic vein, and even when possessing little talent, he understood somewhat the *technique* of form, and was able, in an emergency, to help himself out with a fixed formula. At all events he knew his public, and had learned by long experience what was pleasing and what was not. Hence he omitted passages involving finer shading of analysis in concession to a coarser taste, and lingered with stronger emphasis on those parts where he was sure of his effect. Mutilations were still more frequently owing to weakness of memory and misconception. In the mouth of the *seggers*, therefore, the form of these poems diverged ever more from that of the original text. Industrious monks completed their manuscripts from the text-books of the minstrels, and these products came to posterity on parchment or paper, in beautiful, or in ugly characters, with or without miniatures and arabesques, more or less disfigured, but rarely in their original form. Many became the prey of mice or fire. In such cases we can count ourselves fortunate if their contents were saved from utter ruin by some old printer, a Wynkin de Worde or a Copland.

The task of the historian of literature is thus rendered much more difficult; although it gains in interest. We see from this general history of the Middle English romance how national and popular characteristics could manifest

themselves in such poetical imitations. Their fortunes also involve a portion of English history, and in them is uttered the English spirit, even though it seem to "speak with tongues." And clear lines, separating groups, may after all be distinguished in the many-sided diversity proceeding from the peculiar material, from the individuality of poet, *segger*, landscape, epoch, and the level of culture of the respective auditors. The whole gradually acquires a definite physiognomy. A painter to delineate it is still wanting. May he not delay too long.

In the reign of Henry III. a poet, apparently belonging to the South, translated a romance of *Floire et Blancheflor*. The story of this charming poem was probably derived from late Greek and oriental sources, and may have come to France during the crusades. It had been rendered into French verse according to the courtly style more than once after the middle of the twelfth century.

It is a story of ardent true-love, whose "labour is won." Having arisen in two child-hearts, it strengthens in the time which makes the boy a youth and the girl a maiden, and grows with the obstacles in its path. An adverse fate parts the two lovers by sending the maid into distant captivity and the slavery of a seraglio. But the youth goes forth to find her, and in him are verified the words of the Roman elegist:

> Quisquis amore tenetur eat tutusque sacerque
> Qualibet: insidias non timuisse decet.

He succeeds in tracing his beloved, and in reaching her, despite all dangers and hindrances. When his presence in the seraglio is discovered and the noble pair are condemned to die, their love flames so high in the presence of death that its power at last moves even the enervated, tyrant-hearted sultan, who gives the lovers back to life and happiness.[1] He goes so far as to advance one of the ladies of his seraglio, the friend of Blancheflor, to be his consort for life.

A feminine, indeed an effeminate, vein runs through the narrative. Magic ascribed to rings and other objects, and never-failing chance, in the form of sympathising hosts and

[1] The poet of the *Gerusalemme liberata* may have had this scene in mind in his second canto.

accommodating warders, take the place of manly achievement. The primitive tone and dress were modified in the West. In France a chivalric element was mixed with the erotic fable. We see the hero overcome two Arabian Goliaths, and maintain the innocence of his loved one in trial by combat. But the outlines of the narrative were not effaced, and the southern, almost oriental, tone and style, appearing outwardly in the descriptions of beautiful gardens and the like, still clung to the French romance. They are also perceptible in the English *Floriz and Blancheflur*. The translator confined himself more closely to his original than Middle English poets generally did, and quite successfully reproduced it in pleasing, fluent language, and in well-constructed, short couplets.

His work is a genuine court-romance, in which the troubles and cares of love are drawn with a delicate hand, and conversation and description play an important part. It may have gained approval on account of its attractive material; but it was doubtless fully appreciated only by the few.

A new version from the French was made not long after, while the first began to spread in the North.

The rivals of Floriz and Blancheflur for the prize of true love are Tristan and Isold, the story of whose fate is the more fascinating because it contains truly tragic passages. Love with them is not an innocent nor a virtuous passion. It is a devouring flame, a demoniac power, that, obeying the whim of destiny, seizes even him who resists, and makes him its pliant tool, that compels the wise man to go with open eyes to his destruction, and transforms the noble-minded into a traitor. The sombre, mysterious trait, which in *Tristan and Isold* makes love a Titanic natural force, may harmonise with the character of the rocky coast landscapes of Cornwall and of Britanny. Here lay the principal scene of the *Tristan-saga*, and here it was probably first cultivated.

Tristan and the fair Isold, while on the ship bearing them from Ireland to Cornwall, drink, in an evil hour, of the magic potion intended for Isold and King Mark; Isold is the betrothed bride of Mark, the uncle of Tristan. From this instant they are inseparably united for life. Nothing more exists for them save their love, which knows no other laws than its own. Isold continues her illicit union with Tristan

when she is Mark's consort. The good-natured, weak king allows himself to be hoodwinked again and again by the wiles of the lovers, although frequently warned, and by his own eyes convinced of their faithlessness. Often parted, they always know how to find a way to each other. With the greatest *naïveté* they put aside everything that stands between them and the goal of their desires. When their love is in question, duty, honour, morals, seem entirely absent. In one respect only are they sensitive and conscientious. They will, under no circumstances, betray their love, or break the vows they have mutually sworn. In an hour of weakness Tristan makes another woman his wife—Isold of the White Hand; but remorse follows close upon the deed, and he avoids the bed of his spouse in order to be true to his beloved. This half-accomplished breach of faith becomes the cause of his death. Tristan, very ill from a wound, lies in Britanny, the home of his wife. He awaits with longing suspense the arrival from Cornwall of the fair Isold, who, skilled in medicine, will save him. Her presence on the expected ship is to be shown by a white sail; her absence by a black one. A vessel with a white sail appears; Tristan's much-injured wife, filled with jealousy, knows that her rival approaches. In her rage she hurries to the sick man, and announces the ship's arrival. "For the sake of God, what sail does it carry?" "The sails are black." Despair at the faithlessness of the beloved one seizes the heart of Tristan, and, her name upon his lips, he breathes out his life. Isold lands and hears of his death; her agony finds no utterance. Silently she steps through the crowd gazing at her beauty, to the hall where lies the corpse. There she flings herself upon the bier, and dies in a last embrace.

The *Tristan-saga* became a part of English literature at the time of Edward I., if not earlier. The essential parts of the text we possess may date from that period. It originated north of the Humber.

Of the many French renderings of the saga, the poet of *Sir Tristrem* used a version identical with, or based upon, the work of a certain Thomas. Was not this the cause of an error by which, in the English poem as we have it, Thomas of Erceldoun (Earlstoun on the Scottish border) is given as the poet's authority? Posterity has traced back a

number of prophecies to this Thomas, who lived in the second half of the thirteenth century, and was known as the Rhymer. At the time of Edward II., in whose reign our text seems to have been written down, this man may have already been so renowned in Scotland and the north of England that the name Thomas naturally suggested him only.

Whoever the poet of *Sir Tristrem* may have been, he had no great genius. He followed his copy with slavish fidelity so far as he understood it, but he did not smooth the inequalities in the narrative, nor did he really feel them. These inequalities were not the fault of the French writer, but were caused by gaps in the transmitted text. The English translator was original in but one respect: in the effort to abridge, he advances with long strides, and makes great leaps. This does not prevent him, however, from minutely describing Tristrem's carving of the game he has slain; for this noble art is of so great importance in the estimation of the well-born Englishman that, in a later romance,[1] a princess recognises by it the high birth of her lover. But he condenses in the crises of the story; the weightiest moments are only briefly indicated, sometimes not even that, and the reader must be familiar with the story or in some places read between the lines to understand him. This abrupt style and the peculiar verse used give the composition something of the character of a ballad. We plainly see in *Sir Tristrem* how ballads could arise from metrical romances, and, as may be shown, this was often the case.

No one will deny that this brevity, these unexpected transitions, which, however, do not exclude the use of expletives to fill out the verse, may call forth and augment the charm of mystery; and this method is, perhaps, now and then appropriate to the tenor of the *Tristan-saga*. But employed by an inferior poet, it is one of the lowest expedients of art.

An episode in *Sir Tristrem* will show the style of the poet, not at his worst, and by no means in his most exaggerated manner:

From Ireland to the king[2] came a harper; he brought forth a harp, such as they had never seen with sight; himself, without doubt bore it day and night.

[1] In the *Ipomydon*.
[2] Mark.

Ysonde[1] he had loved long, he that brought the harp. About his neck he bare it, richly it was wrought. He hid it evermore; it never came out: "Thy harp, why wilt thou spare, if thou knowest aught of playing?" "It will not come out without free gifts."

Mark said: "Let me see, harp as thou canst, and what thou askest me, I shall give thee then." "Gladly," said he. A merry lay he began. "Sir king, herewith I have won Ysonde, I prove thee a false man, or I shall have thy queen."

Mark went to counsel, and asked to hear advice. "I must lose my manhood or yield Ysonde from me." Mark was full of dread, Ysonde he let go. Tristrem in that need was in the wood to slay deer that day. Tristrem came just as Ysonde was away.

Then Tristrem was in anger, and chid the king: "Givest thou gleemen thy queen? Hast thou no other thing?" His rote,[2] without doubt, he reached by the ring. Then followed Tristrem the track, there they bring her so blithely to the ship; Tristrem began to sing, and Ysonde began to listen.

Such a song he sang that she was very sad; to her came such lovelonging, that her heart nigh burst in two. The earl sprang to her with many more knights, and said: "My sweet thing, why farest thou so, I pray?" Ysonde must go to land before she went away.

"Within an hour of the day I shall be hale and sound; I hear a minstrel say, he hath a melody of Tristrem." The earl said: "Accursed be he forever, if he comes from Tristrem![3] That minstrel for his lay shall have a hundred pounds of me, if he will with us go, dear, for thou lovest his play."

His playing for to hear, the lady was set on land. To play by the river, the earl led her by the hand. Tristrem, the true companion, found merry notes on his rote of ivory, as they that hour were on the strand. Through that seemly message, Ysonde was hale and sound.

She was hale and sound through virtue of his playing. Therefore was the earl that hour a glad man. A hundred pounds, he gave Tristrem, the noble one. To the ship then they went; in Ireland they full fain would be: the earl and knights three, with Ysonde and Bringwain.[4]

Tristrem took his steed and leaped thereon to ride. The queen bade him to lead her beside him to the ship. Tristrem did as she bade; in the wood he hid her. To the earl he said in that need: "Gone is thy pride, thou dolt; with thy harp thou didst win her that time, thou hast lost her with my rote."[5]

By way of illustration of the form, the last of the strophes cited is given below in the original. The basis of this strophe is four Alexandrines with six accents each, which are divided by the middle rhyme into eight short lines; to these is ad-

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[1] Isold.

[2] A stringed instrument whose name denotes Celtic origin. In Middle High German it is called *Rotte*.

[3] This sentence is not clear in the original

[4] The faithful handmaid of Ysonde.

[5] *Sir Tristrem*, Fytte, ii., st. 63–72.

ded, after a metre with one accent, a fifth Alexandrine, also divided:

Tristrem tok his stede,
And lepe ther on to ride;
The quen bad him her lede,
To schip him biside;
Tristrem did as hye bede;
In wode he gan hir hide;
To th'erl he seyd in that nede:
"Thou hast ytent thi pride,
Thou dote:
With thine harp, thou wonne hir that tide,
Thou tint hir with mi rote."

Love was not the only theme of the Middle English romance. The most exalted figures of the hero-age also inspired the poet. First of all was the *Alexander-saga*, which grew as popular in England as in France and Germany. The oldest English *Alexander-romance* is one of the best productions of the whole class. It probably originated in the north of ancient Mercia, and dates from the reign of Edward I. We owe much to the unknown poet who, with great skill, handled the rich, attractive material and rendered it in pithy verse and forcible, animated, and often picturesque language. As was usual within the range of this material, and, indeed, in harmony with the saga, the poet's talent took a middle ground between scholarly and chivalric verse. We are reminded of the first by a frequent didactic tendency, by interspersed reflections, introductory passages, and descriptions of foreign lands and peoples, with their wonders and prodigies. To the same plainly belongs the enumeration of learned authorities for the statements made,—badly as some of them were chosen;—and it is still more suggested by the poet's attitude in reference to his sources. He mainly follows, for instance, a French version of the legend (one, it would seem, not yet published), but he supplements the material thus gained by a Latin text. He thus ceases to be a mere translator. The spirit of chivalric poetry breaks forth most strongly when the writer leads us to the battle-field, when he presents to us the picturesque advance of the troops, the glittering weapons, the neighing of war-horses; the roaring onset, the tumult, and the slaughter, the war-cry of the fighters and the lamentation of the wounded; or when he

describes brilliant festivals, gorgeous garments, and beautiful women.

Throughout the whole a fresh native flavour appears in the simplicity of expression, in many a detail drawn from English common life, and in frequent reflections. The lyrical passages introducing the separate divisions of the poem have a genuine English charm, whether they are the composer's own or not.

They have no connection with the narrative, and are intended to arouse the attention of the audience. They usually contain a short portraiture of nature and life at some special period of the year or day, to which is added a general reflection; for example:

Whan corn ripeth in every steode,
Mury hit is in feld and hyde;
Synne hit is and schame to chide;
Knyghtis wollith on huntyng ride;
The deor galopith by wodis side.
He that can his time abyde,
Al his wille him schal bytyde.[1]

Sometimes a generalisation takes the place of the picture of nature:

Hors, streyngthe of herte, and hardinesse
Schewith mony faire prowesse.
Nis so fair a thyng, so Crist me blesse,
So knyght in queyntise,
Bote the prest in Godes serwyse.
Sitteth stille in alle wyse:
For here bigynneth gest arise
Of doughty men and gret of prise.[2]

It would be easy to cite similar things in other literatures, especially in the *Alexander-poetry*; in its peculiar development, however, this is specifically English. A prelude, closely resembling it, opens the second part of *Richard Cœur de Lion*, to which we will now turn our attention.

Richard Cœur de Lion appears in poetical tradition as a sort of national Alexander. We may also call the subject-matter of his story national; for the Englishman who translated the French poem for his unlearned countrymen (near the time of Edward I.) did not regard the hero as a foreigner:

In French books is this rhyme written. Unlearned men know it not; unlearned men know no French; among a hundred there is not one.

[1] V. 457–463.
[2] V. 3584–3591.

And yet many of them would hear with glad cheer, of the noble jousts of the doughty knights of England. In sooth, now I will tell of a king, doughty in deed, King Richard, the best warrior that one may find in any tale.[1]

As the version followed by the poet of the English *Alexander-romance* makes the Macedonian hero the son of a magician,[2] so the Anglo-Norman saga gives Richard an enchantress as mother. The romance opens with an account of the way in which the beautiful Cassodorien becomes the consort of Henry II., and of her final marvellous disappearance. Alexander gives token of his future greatness by the subjugation of Bucephalus, and Richard foreshadows his by the deed of heroism to which he owes his name, and whose renown echoes in Shakspere's verse:

Richard that robbed the lion of his heart. . . . .[3]

Like Alexander, Richard undertakes a vast warlike expedition to the Orient, and the busy fancy of the Middle Ages enlivened it with a series of adventures not known to history. While in Alexander, however, the mediæval kingly ideal shines forth in all its brilliancy, Richard generally appears only in the light of a powerful knight with gigantic bodily strength. One of his most conspicuous traits is uncontrolled passion. With his cruelty is mixed wanton barbarity, pitiless humour. He causes the heads of their nearest kindred to be served at table before Saladin's embassadors, who have brought him ransom for the prisoners; and, feasting his eyes on their terror, he helps himself heartily to the horrible dish. "This is the Devil's brother," the Saracens whisper among themselves, "that slays our men and eats them." Richard, with sinister looks, says to his guests: "For my love, be all glad, and look ye be well at ease! Why carve ye nought from your food and eat fast as I do? Tell me, why glare ye so?" Speechless and trembling, the embassadors sit expecting certain death. Richard has other dishes served, accompanied with good wine, and calls upon his guests to be merry; but appetite is wanting, mirth does not respond. Then the king says: "Friends, be not squeamish. This is the manner of my house, that Saracens' heads be first served right hot. But I knew not your customs. As I am a king,

[1] *Richard Cœur de Lion*, 21–32.

[2] It remains to be said that other *Alexander* poets, as for example, Alberic of Besançon, characterise this tradition as a base lie.

[3] *King John*, II. i. Compare also the close of the first act.

Christian, and true man, ye shall certainly return in safe conduct. For I would not for no thing that word of me should go forth into the world that I would misdo messengers."[1]

The poet tells all this quite impartially, and even with visible enjoyment. He is plainly not more delicate than his hero. He unrolls for us in his light, deftly constructed verses, a vivid and variegated picture of knightly life and deeds; but his poetry unconsciously reflects all the rude manners and morals of his epoch, all the arrogance and unbridled coarseness of the mediæval John Bull.

Beside the Anglo-Norman hero, Richard, appears in the twilight of tradition the figure of the British Arthur, whom we last encountered in Laȝamon's *Brut*. The literature in the French language clustering around the Arthurian cycle was rich and diversified. The courtly epic reached technical perfection, and here, for the first time, was achieved the ideal representation of court-life and court-etiquette, with its finished conventional apparatus. In this case it was again evident that English poetry was more intent upon borrowing matter than upon assimilating the formal excellences of foreign models. What seems first to have incited to imitation was not one of those artistically constructed poems that Crestien de Troyes, with a skilful choice of topic, could create out of diffuse material. It was a long-winded prose romance, with confusing and monotonous abundance of episode, with numerous names, a tone of mystery, and a dim, mystical background. The poet of *Arthour and Merlin* translated such a prose romance, in short couplets, it is true, and not without characteristic deviations from the original, but nowhere showing that he had learned anything from Crestien, or had inherited any of his artistic instinct. Instead of an increased courtly tone, it received, in the hands of the imitator, that popular flavour, peculiar to the early English romance, and first noticeable in the introductory landscapes familiar to us in the *Alexander*.

Both Richard and Arthur belong to cycles of tradition of which English territorial patriotism could boast as its own. The English romance, however, had already drawn the French national epic of Charlemagne into its range. It was the *Song of Roland* which was first imitated among the peo-

[1] *Richard Cœur de Lion*, Weber, ch. ix.

ple for whose victorious conquest it had once inspired the foreign foe at Senlac. The power with which the form and import of the grand composition affected the English author is plainly evident. He strove for a terse, pregnant diction, and with some success, but he was not able to give his verses an even, epic movement. His short couplets are often lengthened under the influence of the French ten-syllabled line, and the epic spirit in his original involuntarily moves him to adopt the ancient ornament of the national poetry, alliteration, which he uses without definite rules.

In harmony with the causes which soon after the Conquest alienated the Normans from the French national epic, we rarely find that the more ancient English romance-writers drew from the purer popular wells of the *Charlemagne-saga*. The *Song of Roland*, brought to England by the Conqueror, is an exception that only proves the rule. We already see, in the rendering of this epic, traces of the regard gained in England by versions not original and influenced by clerical invention. The so-called *Chronicle of Turpin* was largely used by the English Roland-poet. He owes to it a very characteristic incident,[1] which is as familiar to the modern French opera as it was to the monkish literature of the Middle Ages.

Besides these, it was principally products of a waning force, epopees of the thirteenth century, that came within the range of the English poets. Especially popular in the reign of Edward II. was the poem of *Otinel*. The plot of this epopee is no part of the old *Charlemagne-saga*. It is rather a collection of incidents and characters touching other Carlovingian *chansons* that were grouped around a new hero scarcely original in anything save his name. The whole invention is conceived as an episode in the cycle of Charlemagne's Spanish wars, although the scene of action lies mainly in Lombardy. This production of the epigonic epic was twice translated into English, in the same period, despite its slight value. A *Sire Otuel* was contributed, in passably good verse, by one translator. It very faithfully reproduced the original, and, as a romance in short couplets, showed, to better advantage than the French *chanson de geste*, whose modicum of epic spirit harmonises ill with the

[1] In brief, the seduction of Christian heroes by heathen women.

single-rhymed strain. Unless perchance the work of the other translator has come to us in a revision, he had meagre poetic talent, and was a bad versifier; but he was thoroughly familiar with the clerical legend of *Charlemagne*, and even rose to the idea of making a cyclic compilation. He inserted his *Otuel*, in what seemed to him a suitable place, in a version of *Turpin's Chronicle*, and he prefixed to the whole an account of Charlemagne's journey to the Orient. The poem in four parts, thus composed, was first taken up in its unity—a unity rather intended than realised—by a modern French critic, and was baptised by him with the name of *Charlemaine and Roland*.

Nothing is perhaps more characteristic of the epoch than the manner in which English poetry dealt with the national past. Two romances dating from the first quarter of the fourteenth century transport us to the Old English period, to the time of Aethelstan and Eadgar; that is, they claim to do this in the same fashion that mediæval romances of Troy claim to reveal the antique world. Guy of Warwick and Bevis of Hampton are both names unknown to English history. They are also unknown to saga, until they emerge as heroes of Anglo-Norman poems of the twelfth century. It is possible, and even probable, that in *Guy of Warwick*, the poet made use of English local traditions, in which things really separated in time and place had already blended. Each of the two poems offers a motley mixture of knightly adventures, such as delighted the imagination of the age of the crusades. Everything is indicative of the period to which they owed their origin; the spirit that pervades them, the combination of religious and worldly motives, the influence of supernatural powers, the relations with the Orient, where much of the action plays—in *Bevis of Hampton*, the greater part—the setting and the moral atmosphere. Many other traits suggest widely dispersed materials of saga and story, naturally including some English ones. He who possesses the fancy of the true student of folk-lore will discern a rejuvenation of Beowulf, the victor over Grendel and Grendel's mother, in Bevis, who kills the dreaded boar of King Ermyn's forest, and who is lowered weaponless into King Inor's dungeon-keep, and by means of a cudgel, accidentally found, overcomes two

dragons that house there; while the other dragon-fight of Bevis, in the vicinity of Cologne, will, perhaps, vividly recall to him Siegfried and the Drachenfels.

The legendary theme around which the *Guy of Warwick* centres is attractive. It awakens many an ancient reminiscence. At the pinnacle of earthly happiness Guy renounces the world, and forsakes his country, his people, and his blooming wife to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He returns to his home after a long absence, a stranger to all. There he finds great distress. King Athelstan is besieged in his capital city, Winchester, by Anlaf, the king of the Danes. He can only be saved from sure destruction by the favourable issue of a single combat, in which the giant Colbrand is to represent the Danish cause. Athelstan in vain seeks a champion who can cope with Colbrand. After days of fasting and prayer he receives in a dream the direction to put his cause into the hands of the first pilgrim he meets at his palace door. The pilgrim—Guy himself, as a matter of course—is with difficulty persuaded to change the staff for the sword, but he finally yields to the entreaties of Athelstan and his nobles. He equips himself, enters the contest, and after a severe struggle comes forth victor. Carried in triumph to Winchester, he at once withdraws from all demonstrations of thanksgiving and honour, again dons the pilgrim's garb, and departs without making himself known. He reveals the secret to King Athelstan, who has followed him, but only after making him swear to keep it inviolate for twelve months. Thereupon he parts from the king and goes to Warwick. He enjoys, as pilgrim, the hospitalities of his own house, and is an unrecognised witness of his consort's life, passing in the practices of piety and benevolence. He departs as he has come, a stranger, and betakes himself to the forest of Ardennes. Here he lives as a hermit until an angel announces his approaching end. He sends for his wife, and breathes his last in her arms. His consort survives him for fourteen days; the same grave then closes over both.

It is a pity that so many accessories are added to this ground-work. We are only slightly interested in Guy's experiences during his pilgrimage. And we are still less moved by that part of the narrative preceding his pilgrim-

age, which includes the long-drawn tale of Guy's wooing of Fenice before she happily becomes his wife. The modern reader has also little sympathy with the adventures of Reinbrun, the son of this marriage, which partly are inserted, in the manner of a Telemachy in this Christian Odyssey, and partly serve to continue it.

The effect was very different upon the naïve auditors of the fourteenth century, especially upon the English, who keenly enjoyed the feats of Guy and Reinbrun, and were not a little proud of their national fellowship with them. Winchester, Warwick, and other well-known names put in connection with such marvellous adventures must indeed have made a deep impression. It is no wonder that *Guy of Warwick* found two English translators as early as the beginning of the century, and that a third was added fifty or sixty years later. The subject-matter attracted poetic treatment as late as in the fifteenth century, and even in Queen Elizabeth's time. For like reasons *Bevis of Hampton* was a great favourite. Until far into the reign of Edward III. the short couplet continued to be the predominant form of the English romance. In the reign of Edward I., however, a rival had arisen whose competition became ever more dangerous. We found in the religious lyrics of the last period, a strophe constructed on the principle of the tail-rhyme (*ryme couee*), that originated in the *versus tripertiter caudati* of the Latin *Sequences*. English popular poetry soon mastered this form, and first, it would seem, in the North. There, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the story of *Horn Childe* and *Maiden Rimnild* was recited or sung in twelve-lined stanzas as follows:

With Horn my son y wil ye be
As your faders han ben with me
And othes ye schul him swere,
That ye schal never fram him fle,
For gold no silver, lond no fe,
Oyein outlondis here;
To Horn his sone he hem bitoke
And dede hem swere opon the boke.
Feute thai schuld him bere;
While that thai live might,
With helme on heved, and brini bright,
His londes for to were.[1]

[1] Ritson, *Anc. Eng. metr. Rom.*, III. 286.

Probably the *seggers* began in the North to clothe their preludes in this strophe when they recited English versions of French romances. They even rewrote in that form especially favourite and conspicuous passages. This usage soon spread over all England. Several romances, translated in couplets from the French, were entirely, or in part, recast into the *ryme couee.* Thus under Edward II. were written in this verse at least the introductions to *Richard Cœur de Lion* and *Beves of Hamtoun*[1] and a great part of *Gy of Warwike;* including what we have termed the ground-work of the poem. *Charlemaine and Roland* has come to us complete, and only in *ryme couee.* In the course of time this rhyme was probably used for direct translation.

The short couplet, however, retained its charm and importance for more select circles and more refined poets. When in the second half of the fourteenth century an art poetry began to flourish that may justly claim to be classic, the tail-rhyme was derided as doggerel, as in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales.* Then the twelve-lined stanza was monopolised by the ballad-singers, while the short couplet held its own for a long time by the side of newer and nobler forms.

But no such sharp division can be distinctly traced until the reign of Richard II. As long as the use of French in every-day life was counted a sign of higher rank and greater refinement, it was impossible for a strictly artistic tendency completely to enter the national poetry. The English chivalric poetry hardly ever appeared in pure court-garb. It was more or less affected by a popular element. We rarely discover that purity and finish of form which is wont to flourish in art-schools. Generally those liberties were taken in which the folk-song delighted. There were contrasts, but they were so variously connected and indistinctly defined that they seemed to blend; as in English society no impassable chasm separates the peer from the commoner, the gentry from the free landholders and citizens.

So much is certain: the native and popular element of the early English romance, as compared with its French model, appears at best advantage in the twelve-lined strophe. Foreign materials do not seem to have been quite naturalised until they had taken this shape. The reason is plain.

[1] Where the strophe has only six lines.

Deviations of form compel and excite greater freedom of treatment. A strophic structure leads to a fixed manner of presentation, and, in fact, to that presentation which is most acceptable to popular poetry, especially the Germanic.

The poetry of a people does not employ the strophe from musical necessity merely. The strophe is like a frame in which a finished picture gains its fullest effect, and folk-poetry is concerned with a series of effective pictures. To reproduce fully and fondly to depict the chief crises of the action, including everything able strongly to stir fancy or feeling; to present vividly these essential moments, even if in themselves they are never so immaterial; yet to indicate lightly or to pass over the links necessary to comprehension, but easily disregarded by a soaring fancy;—these are the phases in the creation of folk-poetry.

It is these things which are characteristic of the early English romances in *ryme couee*. One of the oldest and most beautiful of these is *Amis and Amiloun*.

Among the most widely dispersed traditions of the Middle Ages is the affecting legend of Amicus and Amelius. It is the story of two men resembling each other so nearly that they cannot be told apart. They are bound together in such close friendship that one takes the place of the other in the trial by combat, thus loading his soul with the guilt of perjury, and is punished by leprosy; the other heals, with the hearts' blood of his own children, the man who has suffered for his sake, and who is repudiated by all the world. The mediæval ideal of friendship is embodied in this legend; it is a loyalty that does not shun the greatest sacrifice, the sacrifice of life and even of conscience, and which does not fail of the highest reward, the capability of atoning for the crime. After Amicus is healed with their blood, the slaughtered children of Amelius awake as from a dream. It is not astonishing that pious popular belief celebrated the two friends as martyrs, and that their legend passed from Latin into the vernaculars. The French national epic took possession of this subject as early as the twelfth century. Although only outwardly and loosely connected with its nucleus, *Amis and Amiles* appeared as a part of the Carlovingian cycle. It was composed in single-rhymed strains, and faithfully reproduced the essential import of the legend, but in

the garb of feudal chivalry, and in the epic spirit. This French *chanson de geste* became the source of the English romance, which explicitly refers to the *geste* as its original.[1] The principal features of the original are found in the copy; but there are various deviations in detail. That the two friends here exchange names, the leprous one being Amiloun, the child-slayer Amis, seems immaterial. It is of only negative importance that the loose connection with the *Charlemagne-saga* is quite dissolved in the English poem; that instead of the great emperor, a duke of Lombardy appears, whose daughter, Belisant, bears the same name as Charlemagne's daughter, whose place she has taken. But how characteristic are the many omissions and abbreviations of the English poet, and his rarer additions! Take, for instance, the beautiful Belisant's wooing of the youth (in the original Amiles, in the English Amis) living at her father's court, and notably the manner in which she finally attains her end. What sensuous charm lies in the circumstantial narrative of the French poet! With the Englishman, Belisant is, if possible, more pressing, at all events more blunt, than in his original. The English Belisant, however, does not employ the artifice of the French maiden. The youth finally yields to her advances, we cannot clearly see why. There is a dry relation of the fact, instead of the seductive portrayal of the original. Less refined than his model, but more honest, the English poet cannot deny himself and his readers an occasional climactic effect, calculated for stronger nerves and not to be found in the *chanson de geste*. Immediately before one of the most affecting scenes of the narrative, the recognition of the two friends, Amis is made to beat the leprous beggar most severely. He does this because he takes him for Amiloun's murderer, since he sees him in possession of Amiloun's cup. Finally he understands that it is his own friend whom he is maltreating.

From the board he raised then, and seized his sword as a mad man, and drew it out with violence. On to the castle gate he ran; in all

[1] Since the appearance of the original edition of this work, a learned writer has attempted to show that the poem translated, or imitated, by the author of *Amis and Amiloun*, was not the French *chanson de geste*, but an Anglo-Norman romance, in short couplets, on the same subject. After all that has been said on this question, I confess I am still in doubt as to the mutual relation of the English and the Anglo-Norman poems. Their relation does not seem to me to exclude the possibility of the latter being an imitation, rather than the original of the former.

the court there was no man that might stop him. He fell upon the leper in the wagon, and seized him in his two hands, and flung him into the ditch, and laid on as if he were mad. And all that stood about him made great wailing.

"Traitor," said the duke so bold, "whence haddest thou this cup of gold, and how camest thou thereto? For by him that Judas sold, Amiloun, my brother, possessed it when he went from me." "Yes, truly, sir," he began to say, "it was his when in his country, and now it has happened so. But truly now that I am here, the cup is mine, I bought it dear; I came to it with right."

Then was the duke full angry of mood; no man that about him stood durst lay hand upon him. He spurned him with his foot, and laid on as he were mad, with his naked blade. And by his feet he drew the leper, and trod upon him in the slough. He would stop for nothing. And he said: "Thief, thou shalt be slain, if thou dost not confess the truth where thou foundest the cup."

Childe Amoraunt[1] stood among the people, and saw his lord, how he was ruefully treated with injustice and wrong. He was both hardy and strong; he caught the duke in his arms, and held him still upright. "Sir," he said, "thou art rude and unfeeling, to slay that gentle knight. Well sorely may he rue the hour that ever he took the wound for thee, to save thy life in fight."

When Sir Amis heard him so say, he sprang to the knight without more delay, and clasped him in his two arms. And often he said, "alas;" his song was "welaway!" He looked upon his bare shoulder, and saw the gruesome wounds there, as Amoraunt had said. He fell a-swooning to the ground, and oft he said, "alas, the hour that ever he bode that day."

"Alas," he said, "my joy is lost. A greater monster was never born; I know not what I may do. For he saved my life before; I have requited him with sorrow and shame, and wrought him much woe. O brother," he said, "for charity, forgive thou me this rueful deed that I have smitten thee so." And he forgave him all so quickly and kissed him many a time weeping with "eighen two."[2]

The adventures of the *King of Tars* were also sung in twelve-lined stanzas. The king's beautiful and devout daughter has the heroism to marry the pagan sultan of Damascus in order to save her father, and is rewarded by the conversion of her husband to the Christian faith.

The story of *Sire Degarre* (*l'égaré*), on the contrary, was told in short couplets. He is a foundling, born out of wedlock, who goes forth to seek his father and mother. He succeeds in finding them both, but is not recognised by his mother until he has given her his hand at the altar, nor by his father until he has fought with him. The representation of the familiar theme is interrupted in this well-constructed,

[1] Amiloun's faithful companion.
[2] *Amis and Amiloun*, 2065–2136.

symmetrical romance by only a single episode. Its heroine is a maiden, beset by a giant, and the hero by combat wins her for his bride. In this episode figures the lonely castle-hall with the dwarf in attendance. It is, in brief, a conventional tale of chivalry.

Let us conclude. The early English romance did not, as a whole, reach the level of its French model. Not only the honour of invention must be ascribed to the French (invention in composition, not in material), but also that of a more delicate execution and more harmonious presentation. The frequently abridged English versions are, as a rule, poorer, ruder, and of a less complete logical structure; and their excelling qualities, a more popular tone, a more vigorous painting within narrower compass, do not make good these defects. But we are charmed by the joy they manifest in nature, in the green forests, and in hunting, and we contemplate not without satisfaction this rude primeval force that does not exclude deep feeling, even if it often indulges in coarseness. Thus the English muse, if less delicate and dainty than her French sister, was less artificial; if more passionate, was less lascivious; and in her enthusiasm for what is grandly colossal, her joy in the actual, she showed, even when repeating foreign romances, many of the features that were to characterise her in the time of her full splendour.

III.

By the side of the romance was unfolded what Germans would call the *Novelle*. In English there then existed, as now, no comprehensive specific name to distinguish one from the other; for "tale" may designate both in the same manner as, at present, every romance is called a "novel," while the word "novelette" only points out a difference of greater or less extent. The element of quantity is, indeed, not unimportant, but it is only secondary. The real distinction lies in the subject-matter and in the mode of treatment.

The *Novelle*, for which we will substitute the English word *tale*, requires a simple, easily grasped subject-matter, and disdains episodes. In the romance of that time we have a more or less complicated action; the unity rests in the person of the hero, and the interest with which he imbues us,

in the combination of motives, in the idea. The tale concerns itself with the character of its heroes only so far as this is revealed in the plot. In the case of historical or typical personages, it assumes the necessary pre-knowledge, and is content with brief hints as regards other personages, if it does not simply dispose of them by the words, a "knight," a "youth," or a "widow." The romance makes us intimately know the heroes for whom our interest is claimed; in the modern novel the main stress is often laid upon the influence of the events related upon the character of the hero.

The tale creates a greater interest in things, the romance in persons; that appeals to the intellect, this chiefly to the imagination. Hence the tale has an elegant brevity of style, which, in the crisis, may become picturesquely graphic or vivid with dramatic power; but the romance has epic breadth and dwells on the circumstantial. The plot of a good tale is in itself a work of art; that of the romance is made so by the art of the writer. We understand why the tale was more successful in the Middle Ages, and the romance at the present time. It is easier to repeat a tale, an anecdote, than a romance; on the other hand it is very hard to invent a good tale.

These divisions often blend. Excepting one episode, the material of *Sire Degarre* would be well suited for a tale. The style of many English romances, on the contrary, would recall the tale if it did not much rather remind us of the ballad. Romances frequently shrink into tales by abridgment; thus the *Roman du roi Guillaume* later became a *Dit du roi Guillaume*. The mediæval romance resembles the saga, as the tale does the fable (*Märchen*), but fabulous traditions are very often connected with a hero of saga, and likewise saga-materials are moved out of their original local and personal relations back to the vagueness of fable.

Thanks to the cosmopolitan, simple materials forming the subject-matter of the most ancient occidental tales, no doubt can arise as to their character. French fiction succeeded in creating a corresponding style for this art-form.

The French *fabliau*, with its lightly-flowing short couplets and its elegant, often piquant diction, became a standard for the English tale of this period. One of the most ancient attempts shows, however, that, without this influence, the

tale would have developed as well—though diverging somewhat—in England. In later times also English poets very often turned directly to Latin sources. The *Disciplina clericalis* and like compilations had been circulated in England in the original as well as in French renderings. After the days of Henry II. several collections of tales in Latin prose had been made on English ground, or at least by English hands. There were Walter Map's *Nugae Curialium*, Odo of Cerinton's *Narrationes*,[1] the *Otia imperialia* of Gervase of Tilbury. Alexander Neckam's work, *De naturis rerum*, is also full of such matter. Even mere transcribers began, in their fashion, to collect short Latin stories; that is, to write them together in the same codex.

The English tale seems to have begun to develop first in the south-east, in the region of Kent or Sussex. There the *fabliau* of *Dame Siriz*, or *Sirith*, arose, probably before the death of Henry III. The theme is an attack on a woman's chastity through threats of punishment awaiting her in case of resistance. The story plainly bears the mark of its Indian origin; for the punishment threatened is transformation into an animal, which points to the transmigration of souls. By making his heroine come forth victorious from the temptation, a later Indian writer used the material for the glorification of womanly constancy and conjugal fidelity. Another rendering, tinged with Persian ideas, found entrance into several oriental versions of the *Book of the Seven Sages*. By means of an expedient, the reverse of which is employed with Shakspere's Angelo, it reaches a conclusion that only half satisfies poetical justice. In *Measure for Measure* the tempter's own wife is conducted to him; in the other case her own husband is brought to the woman forced to yield. The version that came into western literature has no satisfactory close. It there spread by means of the *Disciplina clericalis*, whence the English poet directly or indirectly drew his material. He does not seem to have used a French source. Without doubt he understood Latin, and belonged to the fellowship of wandering clerics. This is plainly evident (in spite of an occasional malediction on the procuress) in the pleasure with which he represents one of his fellows as suc-

[1] Here again it is not to be ignored that, at least among Odo's fables, some are to be found that betray their passage through the French.

cessful in the conquest of hearts. This conqueror, too, is named William, or at least, Willekin. Willekin is a rich, aristocratic *clerc* who has fallen desperately in love with a merchant's wife. The merchant betakes himself to the annual fair at Boston in Lincolnshire, that then attracted tradesmen from far and near. Willekin takes this opportunity to visit the wife. Being kindly received, he ventures to express his wishes, but is sharply rebuffed. Prayers are as unavailing as promises; he sadly turns homeward. On the advice of a friend he applies to Dame Siriz, an old procuress, who has the reputation of being a kind of witch. "With much misfortune I lead my life," he laments to her, "and that is for a sweet wife called Margeri. I have loved her many a day, and of her love she says me nay; therefore I come hither. But if she does not change her mind, for sorrow must I wax mad or kill myself; therefore a friend has counselled me to go and tell thee of my sorrow. He said to me thou couldest, without fail, help and avail me and bring me out of woe through thy craft and thy deeds; if that be so, I will give thee rich meed." The prudent witch, concerned for her safety and her life, is not so easily won over. With impudent hypocrisy, she makes herself out as innocent as a child: "Benedicite! Here hast thou son, much sin. The Lord, for his sweet name, let thee therefore have no shame. Thou servest for God's anger when thou sayest of me such blame. For I am old and sick and lame; sickness has made me full tame. . . . I am a holy woman; of witchcraft I know nothing; but with good men's alms, each day I feed my life, and pray my Paternoster and my Creed; God help them at their need who help me my life to lead, and grant that they may well speed, and his life and his soul be dishonoured that hath sent thee to me on this errand; may he grant me to be revenged on him who hath spoken this shame on me." But the lover will not be refused. His information is from a trustworthy source; he repeats his promises specifically, and talks of many a pound and many a mark, warm furs, and warm shoes. Dame Siriz relents. After she has once more satisfied herself that Willekin is in bitter earnest with his love, she requires from him a solemn promise to keep the matter secret. "For all the world I would not that I were brought before the chapter

for any such works. My judgment would soon be given to be driven with shame on the ass, with priests and with clerks at my back." Willekin promises secrecy by the holy rood. Then she declares herself ready to help him, receives from him twenty shillings, and makes ready for the enterprise. She gives her little dog pepper and mustard to eat, until his eyes run, and then leaves the house with him, telling Willekin to await her return. She drags herself like a poor old woman, tormented by pain and hunger, to the merchant's wife. It is not hard for her to arouse the sympathy of the kind-hearted housewife, who puts bread, meat, and wine before her, and tries to cheer her. While eating, however, she is more than ever overcome by her sorrow. "Alas, alas, that ever I live! All the sin I would forgive the man that would smite off my head: I would my life were bereft me!" "Poor wife, what aileth thee?" The old woman tells her tale: she had a beautiful daughter, married to a noble man whom she loved only too well. During the absence of her husband, a clerk tried to seduce her; but she repulsed him. Then he avenged himself through magic by transforming her into a bitch. "This is my daughter of whom I speak; my heart breaks in anguish for her. Look how her eyes weep, on her cheek the tears meet." The solicitude of the merchant's wife may be imagined; she confides to Dame Siriz what she has just done. "God Almighty be thy help that thou be neither bitch nor whelp! Dear lady, if any clerk offers thee love, I counsel that thou grant his boon, and become his lover soon; and if thou dost not, a worse counsel thou takest." The woman repents her action and implores Dame Siriz to bring Willekin to her. Willekin is soon found, and this time has the wished-for reception. The poem closes with a few vigorous words from the procuress.

The audacious poet possessed unmistakable talent for characterisation and psychological detail. He writes in a jovial tone, and with a touch from common life. He varies, with dramatic animation, the speakers and the place of the action. Although his poem begins in *ryme couee*,[1] he quite frequently changes to the short couplet.

[1] The six-lined strophe that he uses is different from the favourite one of the romances. It is so constructed that in the scheme, *a a b c c b*, either all the lines have three accents or *a* and *c* have four, and *b* only two. In the familiar twelve-lined strophe, and the six-lined stanza of the romances as well, the *b* line has three and the other lines four accents.

Another *clerc* belonging to the same time and neighbourhood was not less bold and waggish, but his style is more like that of the art-poetry. He writes in correct couplets, with a lucid, dexterous manner and a delicate shading of motive. His material and ideas, indeed, accorded as little with courtly convention as did those of his models, the French clerics. In their hands the animal saga, or (if the pre-existence of such a thing is questioned) the animal-fable, broadened into the animal-epos, and became a homogeneous whole. He borrowed his subject-matter from a branch of the *Roman de Renart*, whose ground-work was already given in the antique fable of the *Fox and the Goat*. The animal-epos, however, dealt with the fox and the wolf, with Reynard (*Renart*, in the English poem, *Reneuard*) and Isengrim (*Sigrim*), and was extended and modified in detail. The English poet intelligently followed his excellent French text, not without adding something of his own. The absence of various piquant features of the original will be regretted by many; but it cannot be gainsaid that his version is in the main more probable and better arranged, and that the effect is heightened by the restoration of a more delicate connection between the two crises of the story. The English narrative is a pattern of simplicity of plan and relation of theme.[1] It has many touches of true psychological insight, and the most delightful comic humour. When we read it we keenly regret that this poet did not venture upon a greater work in his specialty; he could have created an English *Reynard* able to hold an honourable place beside the matchless portrayal of the Fleming Willem.[2] Rather than lament, however, let us rejoice that in him we may greet one of the greatest of Chaucer's English forerunners.

Our poet was Chaucer's predecessor not only as a master of the art of story-telling, but because he was the only one known to us before Chaucer who worked in the English language upon a theme from the animal-saga. Latin animal-fables in prose or verse, plainly showing the partial in-

[1] Unfortunately the connection is somewhat broken, on account of a gap in the text before us, that, strangely enough, seems not to have been noticed before. After v. 30 (or v. 32) several verses must have been dropped in which it was told how the fox satisfied his hunger upon the fowls within his reach. This seems a natural conclusion, and it is very positively shown in v. 68 and v. 98.

[2] The poem *Van den vos Reinaerde*.

fluence of the French animal-epos, are more frequent in English manuscripts of the time.

The French *fabliau* was wont to draw much into its range that did not belong to the strict epic class, especially mere descriptions for the purpose of satire. England followed the example of France also in this respect. A *fabliau*, with the title *The Land of Cokaygne*, and composed as early as the thirteenth century, follows French accounts, and gives an exhaustive portrayal of the land of idleness. But it adds to this the description of a local monastery and its inmates, in a telling, if somewhat too drastic, satire.

The *Debate of the Carpenter's Tools*, that originated near the middle of the fourteenth century, in the eastern midland country, belongs to the class of *estrifs* or *desbats*. An animated discussion arises among the tools resting in a carpenter's workshop. The question is whether they will be successful in their effort to keep from ruin their master, who loves beer too well and lives too near the tavern, or if he is too far gone for help. The master's wife takes part in the dispute. She naturally stands with the pessimists, and at the close laments that she cannot follow the example of the "draught nayle," who declares his intention of finding another master.

The French *lai* was also soon given in English imitations to a larger public. Marie de France was the best-known representative of this class; her attractive *Lai le Fresne* (the *Lay of the Ash*) was translated soon after the beginning of the fourteenth century. It was faithfully and with talent rendered into English couplets. With all their simplicity, the contents are quite romantic. The wife of a Breton knight has taken a friend to task for conjugal infidelity, because she has given birth to twins, and has herself the misfortune to bring two girls at once into the world. In order to escape the disgrace she has herself conjured up, she causes one of her children to be exposed immediately after birth. The child is found in a hollow ash by the porter of a neighbouring convent, is baptised by the name "le Fresne," and brought up by the abbess. She grows to be a charming maiden, and wins the love of a young knight, who succeeds in gaining entrance to the cloister, and finally carries her off. Further on, the knight is persuaded to marry a maiden of noble blood, and,

as fate has it, she is the own sister of his beloved. Poor le Fresne thus stands in almost the same relation to her sister that the heroine of the later *Griseldis-saga* bears toward her daughter. Loving and unselfish as Griseldis, much too unselfish for our modern sense, le Fresne endures her hard fate with a broken heart, but without one word of complaint, and on the wedding day she is busier than any other servant. She looks at the prepared nuptial bed, and, finding it too unadorned for the beautiful bride, spreads over it the gold-embroidered cloth in which she herself was once exposed. This leads to her recognition. Her sister voluntarily yields. The marriage just concluded is made null by the bishop, and le Fresne gives her hand to her lover as his wife.

The story of *Orfeo and Heurodis*, dating from about the same time, appears also under the name of *Lai*, and with the consequent claim to Breton origin. It is difficult to recognise Orpheus and Eurydice in these names; the subject-matter, the dress and mounting of the legend are not less travestied than the names. The travesty, however, is throughout naïve, and is based upon such a complete appropriation and adjustment of the antique material to mediæval views that this charming poem seems like a fairy tale of natural growth. The lower world is transformed into a fairy kingdom. In company with the king of fairies and his train, Eurydice by chance visits the dense wood to which Orpheus has withdrawn after the loss of his wife. Both weep at sight of each other, for Eurydice recognises her husband, despite his savage aspect, and his hair rolling down below his girdle. Eurydice is quickly transported again to the enchanted land. But Orpheus follows her, and sees her disappear through a rock. He too ventures into the dark cavern, supposed to be three miles deep. He soon reaches luminous fairy-land, and perceives a palace glittering with gold and precious stones. He craves entrance as a minstrel. In the hall he begins to touch his harp in the presence of the king, who wonders no less at his appearance than did many an inmate of hell at Dante's entrance. The king listens in deep silence to his playing, and under the spell of its tones, asks the harper to name his own reward. Orpheus demands Eurydice, and leaves fairy-land with her. He then

returns to his home, where he makes himself known, having made sure of the fidelity of the servants he left there.

All these poems show the direct influence of French poetry. Perhaps the one relating "How a merchant did his wife betray" is an exception. The theme in which true and pretended affections, put to the proof, appear, after long misunderstanding, as they really are, is a familiar one, and, in the sense of a test of friendship, is especially frequent in mediæval literature. This poem turns upon the contrast between the neglected faithful wife, and the preferred greedy mistress of a rich merchant.[1] The merchant undertakes a journey. At his departure his wife begs him to buy her a penny's worth of wit. On the way he gives the penny to an old man, and at his advice, makes the love test. The test consists in his representing himself, on his return, as entirely impoverished, and seeking protection from the consequences of homicide. We may imagine how he is received by his paramour, and his very different reception by his wife. The merchant once more goes to his mistress, this time in rich clothing. As a matter of course, she repents her former conduct, and wishes, if possible, to retrieve it. He succeeds by a stratagem in obtaining all the presents he has made her, and he takes these to his wife as her penny's worth. The penny and its adventures is the type of the English tale, and gives to later versions the title *A Pennyworth of Wit* (or *The Chapman of a Pennyworth of Wit*). Our poem is set in a naïve ballad key. It is written in couplets, like almost all the tales of this period; but these are unmistakably grouped in strophes, and were sung, as appears from the opening.

Many of the shorter stories of the time have doubtless been lost; for anything of limited compass is not likely to be written down, and is readily destroyed when written.

An imperfect indemnity for the loss of single tales is the preservation of a compilation of tales, *The proces of the sevyn sages*,—imperfect because nothing can compensate for the originality of form and treatment possible in even the shortest poem. This collection was made towards the beginning of the fourteenth century, from one of the many versions of the *Roman des sept sages*.

[1] The title, as we see, only expresses the perfidy of the merchant, and by no means indicates the substance of the story.

The story, enclosing the short tales like a frame, is as follows: The emperor Diocletian of Rome, after the death of his consort, entrusts his son Florentine to seven wise masters to be educated. They instruct him at a retired spot near Rome, in all arts and sciences. The emperor, by the advice of his barons, marries a second time. After a long period the new empress learns of the existence of a son by the first marriage. She resolves, in the interest of her own children, upon Florentine's destruction. To accomplish her purpose, she persuades the emperor to have his son come to him. Florentine arrives at court with his teachers; but in order to escape a misfortune prophesied by the stars, he speaks not a word for seven days. The stepmother makes good use of this time, and the seven sages are forced to summon all their art to work against her machinations. The empress plays the role of Potiphar's wife. The immediate execution of his son intended by the emperor is postponed at the remonstrance of the seven wise men. Then follows a seven-days' struggle for the life of Florentine. The empress relates seven stories in her cause. The effect of each of them, however, is neutralised by one of the seven stories told by the seven masters successively. The tales of the empress are intended to inspire Diocletian with mistrust and fear of his son, as well as of his wise counsellors. The stories of the sages warn him against hasty action, by which innocence may be punished, and against the cunning of women. At the close, Florentine, who may now again speak, himself tells a story that has a certain bearing upon his own position, and finally discloses his stepmother's guilt. The empress makes a confession, and dies by fire.

Though the connecting story differs widely from its first model and is quite unlike it in livery and in colouring, the disparity between India and England seems still greater when we consider the single tales. Among the fifteen contained in the English version are only three, or at the most four, that belong to the oriental parent stock of the *Book of the Seven Wise Men*. In the other cases the original tales have been supplanted by new ones; but these are, as a rule, not less ancient, and many can also lay claim to Indian derivation. Thus unceasing change in the material of old formations leaves hardly more than their outlines, and old material is constantly used to create new formations.

Many a familiar theme is treated in a new manner; and many a well-known name is applied to unaccustomed objects and persons. Thus we recognise the treasure-house of Rhampsinitus in the treasure-tower of the emperor Octavian (*Octovien*). One of the seven wise men of Rome, with his son, gains entrance into the tower, but at a second attempt, sticks fast in a moat filled with viscous substances. In order to save himself from exposure, he causes his son to cut off his head. The son throws the head into a pit, and succeeds by his craftiness in diverting suspicion from himself and his family. The reckless conduct of this son, as regards his father, is intended to prejudice the emperor Diocletian against his son Florentine.

The next tale tells the old but ever new story of the locked-out husband, which Boccaccio relates in his *Decameron*, and centuries after, Molière, first in a youthful production, and afterwards in *George Dandin*.

Again we meet the celebrated physician Ypocras (*Hippocrates*), who appears as the murderer of his own more learned nephew, is punished for his deed by dysentery, and dying, openly confesses his guilt.

Merlin steps upon the scene in the eleventh narrative, this time as counsellor of King Herod of Rome; while the ninth turns upon the magic arts of the necromancer Virgil at Rome.

The English renderer of the *Sevyn Sages* invented nothing of all this. Not only were the materials dispersed in numberless mediæval versions; they had all been definitely cast before, and placed in *The Seven Wise Masters*. The most important changes undergone by this book took place partly in the East, and partly in the translation into Latin, and while in that language. The French remodellers chiefly arranged the stories, and the details of the whole. The English poet can claim only the merits of a more or less faithful translation.

A most exhaustive examination would be necessary more exactly to determine the home of this translation; but it is certainly to be sought in eastern England. The style is fluent, and the short couplets are evenly constructed. Unusual talent is nowhere evident.

At the time when the *Historia septem sapientum Romae*

took on an English dress, the first beginnings of another great compilation in Latin already existed.

The preachers, and especially the mendicant friars, had long been in the habit of making use of Æsopian fables and other tales in the pulpit. Stories of various kinds, romantic, allegorical, or legendary, were compiled for the moral edification of inmates of monasteries. Roman history, or the later Roman writers, were often searched for suitable material. A collection of stories drawn from such sources, fitted out with moral application or mystical interpretation, formed the ground-work of the *Gesta Romanorum*, later so celebrated. Other materials were very soon added; indeed, extraneous matter may have been incorporated with, or subjoined to, the original collection. In the versions that have reached us hardly anything justifies the title save the frequent references to the reign of some Roman emperor of the old or the new era; names like Conrad, Frederick, Henry II., also occur.

The foundation of the *Gesta Romanorum* was most probably laid in England during the reign of Edward I.

Inexhaustible material was thus continually gathered for future centuries. Cervantes, Shakspere, all the literature of the Renaissance, largely subsisted on the resources stored during the Middle Ages. But the farther course of the fourteenth century clothed a great part of this matter in forms that belong to universal literature, because they are imperishable. Such success, however, was possible in that time only in the tale.

This was the only class of epic writing still capable of the highest development in the Middle Ages; for the old epos had long ago vanished forever, and the poet of the *Divine Comedy* had died in the year 1321.

IV.

With the legend we enter upon the field of specifically religious, ecclesiastical poetry. The religious epic in this period had an abundance and variety of forms and topics, which, unfortunately, found no corresponding abundance and variety of poetic talent. Legendary matter from the most diverse centuries and places poured in from all sides. Ideas

and themes familiar of old are found side by side with those which the stricter tendency of Old English theology had been able to banish, but to which the doors were now opened wide in consequence of growing passion for authorship, waning erudition and increasing belief in the marvellous. Thus we have the attractive legend of the *Assumption of the Virgin*,[1] that originated in the East during the second half of the fourth century, and had received the freedom of Norman England since its rendition in the second quarter of the twelfth century by the *trouvère* Wace.[2] There is the legend of the *Childhood of Jesus*, blending the charming and the fantastic; this likewise reaches back far into the early Christian time. On the flight into Egypt, dragons and lions pay homage to the divine child. The tree under whose shade the holy family rest bends low at the command of Jesus, to give its fruit to the hungering and thirsty Mary, while refreshing water bubbles forth from its roots. Later the Saviour performs the most extraordinary miracles; he forms twelve flies from moist earth, seats himself upon a sunbeam, and the like, and he manifests his power over life and death on countless occasions.

The *Legend of the Holy Rood*, so much loved by the English previous to the Conquest, had gained new significance from the crusades. A rich literature is connected with this beautiful, ever changing and expanding tradition, which begins in paradise and goes on after the finding of the cross by St. Helena.

Such themes as Christ's descent into hell in the *Evangelium Nicodemi* or the *Visio Pauli*, continued to exercise their old charm. To them may be added the *Purgatory* of St. Patrick (the legend of Owain) and the widely disseminated and well-known legend of *Tungdalus*. The oft-sung virgin martyrs, Margaret and Katharine, soon reappeared, and they were joined by the penitent sinner, Mary Magdalen, and the "good sinner," Gregory.

The *Story of Gregory* differs from the great majority of legends by its profundity and the poetic spirit which can

[1] The Legend of the *Assumption of the Virgin* was not unfamiliar to Old English literature, as the publication of the *Blickling Homilies* has markedly shown, (compare p. 137 *et seq.* ed. Morris).

[2] In the poem on the *Conception of the Holy Virgin*, in which the contents give much more than the title promises.

glorify a horrible subject in the glow of religion. Gregory, a child of shame, is put into a boat by his mother immediately after his birth, and consigned to the sea. Having grown up in ignorance of his descent, he becomes, like a second Œdipus, the liberator of his country and the husband of his mother. When the truth comes to light, he expiates the guilt thus innocently incurred by severe penance for seventeen years. At last, chosen pope of Rome by divine command, he has as such the happiness to pronounce to his own mother the forgiveness of her crime. This subject was worked over from the French into English verse in the north midland, probably not long after the middle of the thirteenth century. Both the character and poetic treatment of the legend lie on the boundary between ecclesiastical and secular epic poetry.

A series of legends much resembling the tale, and deserving the name of *contes dévots*, do not treat of the life or death of a saint, but of any miracle that breaks into the ordinary course of life. The Virgin Mary, especially, was made by the piety of the Middle Ages to work such miracles in favour of her devotees.

A southern manuscript,—the well-known Vernon manuscript in Oxford,—has preserved eight or nine of a large number of *Legends of the Virgin* that perhaps originated in the first half of the fourteenth century in the west midland; most if not all of them may have come from French sources.

It had long been a national custom in France to recite rhymed lives of the saints, either during the mass, or, where the Roman curia had been able to prohibit this, at least during the evening service. In England the way for this custom was prepared by Aelfric's alliterative homilies, and it found speedy entrance there, calling forth ever renewed demand and production. Each ecclesiastical holiday was, if possible, to be solemnised by its special legend in English verse.

This demand was first most decidedly met in the south, and there the legend gradually grew fixed in form.

Three metres claim consideration for the religious epic of this period: the short couplet, the long line varying from Alexandrine to tetrameter, and the *ryme couee.* The last form, originally employed only for lyrics, seems not to have

appeared in the legend until toward the close of the thirteenth century, when ballad-singers introduced it into the romance of chivalry. The use of the *ryme couee*, or tail-rhyme, was much less general in religious narrative, however, than in secular. It was made available only in isolated classes of subjects, as the *Visio Pauli*, the *Ascension of the Virgin*, the *Owain* legends, and the like; and in some of these cases but temporarily. The *ryme couee* occurs still more rarely in the true lives of the saints. But it was used in the more ancient versions of the life of St. Alexius; at first, in six-lined strophes, and later, plainly affected by gleemen's poetry, in stanzas of twelve lines.

The short couplet was of greater moment in the religious epic. It was the metre of the older versions of the *Ascension of the Virgin*, of which the southern original must have arisen soon after 1250. The *Childhood of Jesus* (Laud manuscript, No. 108), as well as most of the legends of the Virgin, were also written in short couplets, and such subjects as the *Visio Pauli* and the *Evangelium Nicodemi* were mainly treated in this form. More comprehensive writings from the biblical narrative, as the story of Adam and his sons, were most simply presented in this metre. Neither was it unknown to lives of the saints; a version of the legend of St. Magdalena, dating from near the beginning of the fourteenth century, was composed in short couplets, and these soon came into general use in Northumbria.

In the south, however, lives of the saints seem, from the first, to have been written chiefly in a verse that may be termed the Middle English Alexandrine, having six or seven, and even eight accents. Regular *septenarii* or tetrameters are more rarely found; when they occur the end-rhyme usually consorts with a middle-rhyme, especially in the tetrameter, that thus became the basis of a strophe of short verses with alternating rhyme. The long line first appears in single-rhymed, four-lined strophes; they were the natural outcome of the form-development observed at the close of the last period in works like the *Passion*. At about 1270 the legend of St. Margaret, and, not much later, those of St. Katharine and Mary Magdalen were cast in such strophes. Tetrameters, thus joined, and broken by the middle rhyme, yielded the eight-lined strophe of the Gregorian

legend.[1] The lives of the saints proper, however, gradually abandoned the somewhat difficult form of four like end-rhymes in favour of Alexandrines, merely rhymed in pairs.

By the same time, the single legends were beginning to be united in a *Cycle* connected with the feast-days of the church year. The Alexandrine couplet became, therefore, the metre of the *Legend-cycle*. For this cycle a number of saints' lives were put into English for the first time, and others were translated anew; but occasionally the compiler was content to take up earlier translations, with some alterations. Existing poetical versions and interpretations of Gospel texts in the Christmas and Easter cycles were also put to use, and longer Advent and passion poems arose from their combination. Thus a complete *liber festivalis* was composed in English verse. This has come to us in various manuscripts; but, unfortunately, they are usually broken by gaps, and there is always a difference in arrangement, in readings, and even in the subject-matter.[2]

The origin of this compilation mainly dates from the last quarter of the thirteenth century. It was completed in the south, as already indicated, and chiefly in those western countries where the southern dialect makes a deep incision toward the north into the midland country. We may regard the great monastery at Gloucester as the centre, the home, of this literary movement, whose surge made itself felt far away.

The sources from which materials flowed to the monks of Gloucester were various. The great part of them were, doubtless, written in Latin. French poems may also have been occasionally used, but this influence is, on the whole, more perceptible in isolated legends. A direct effect upon this later *Legend-cycle* from English works of earlier periods could hardly be proved. The progressive changes in language finally made it impossible to comprehend them, and the tremendous mass of Latin material made their use unnecessary. Thus the lives of national English saints, of an Austin, a Swithin, a Kenelm, an Edmund, a Dunstan, came to our legend poets in a Latin dress.

[1] *Mary Magdalen* (contained in the Laud MS.) seems to be written in tetrameters; the middle-rhyme also frequently appears, but not consistently throughout, so that the short line was not yet fully developed.

[2] In the later copies much quite extraneous matter, often clothed in other metrical forms, is found in the *Cycle*.

At the time when their activity was at its height, the Italian Jacobus a Voragine, bishop of Genoa, wrote a similar legend-cycle in Latin prose, with the title *Legenda aurea*. The exact correspondence between his work and that of some of the English legends, as shown, for instance, in the lives of Christopher and Margaret, has given rise to the theory that the *Golden Legend* was the source of many of the English lives of saints. It is to be remembered, however, that Jacobus a Voragine often, without scruple, copied older texts, so that this correspondence may arise from a use of the same authorities.

What a far-reaching view into extremes of time and place is opened to us when we turn over the leaves of this Middle English cycle of legends! On the one hand, the distant Orient, on the other, Ireland; the era of the founding of the church, or still earlier epochs, and the thirteenth century! Archbishop Edmund of Canterbury, who died in 1242 and was canonised in 1246, has a place here beside his name-patron, the East Anglian king and martyr, Edmund.

Equal diversity is evident when we compare the character and import of the single legends. Now we have the most delicate poesy, the most fervent depth of feeling; now grotesque, even repulsive, scenes, and fantastic miracles. These elements are sometimes united, and we are reminded of the necessity of laying aside our modern æsthetic standard, if we wish to do justice to the fancy of earlier days.

It is not to be denied that the farther the Middle Age progressed, the more the legend-forming power was palsied, and that in the same degree as the church became secularised, religious fancy seemed to become gross and alien to its theme. The accounts of miracles grew continually more prodigious; old motives were varied and loaded down with monotonous exaggerations; the rôle given to the devil in the world became ever more prominent.

But the cheering reverse side was not wanting. In the midst of this degeneracy of official churchdom, the religious feeling of select spirits, greatly refined and ennobled, rose to the regions of mysticism; and the impulse of enlightenment asserted itself in various forms and degrees, including a kind of criticism, however modest and at times timid it might be. In our English legends, too, there are occasional traces of

such criticism, as in the life of St. Margaret. According to the story, the devil comes in the shape of a dragon into the cell of the saint and swallows her; she, however, makes the sign of the cross; the body of the monster bursts; and the virgin steps forth unhurt. The poet thereupon remarks, in harmony with Jacobus a Voragine: "But I do not tell this for true, for I do not find it truly authenticated. If it is true or not, who can know? It would be against nature that the devil should be brought to death; for he is capable of suffering no kind of death; hence I cannot believe it. Also this I do not believe, that his might would be strong enough to take up in his body so holy a creature."[1]

There was still another remedy against the fear of the encroaching dominion of the devil. For a long time men had not hesitated to treat the evil spirit with a kind of humour. How sadly for him ends the temptation that he has prepared for St. Dunstan! He comes in the form of a beautiful woman to the holy abbot,[2] who is, as usual, spending his leisure hours at work in his smithy. Dunstan converses with the apparition in a friendly manner, until a pair of tongs he has laid in the fire, are glowing with heat. Then he takes them, and with quick, skilful clasp, pinches the devil's nose between them, and squeezes and shakes it with the red-hot iron until the evil one howls and dances with pain, and, after his fortunate liberation, hurries away, with the loud cry: "Out, what has the bald-head done! what has the bald-head done!"

Such stories put the faithful into a state of serene edification. With what satisfaction, however, must they have heard legends like that of *St. Christopher*, from whose finest features, stamped with its sign manual, the Teutonic spirit seems to radiate! It must have been a consoling conviction to the brave heart that the arch-enemy was not the most powerful on earth; that it could choose Him for its Lord under whose banner all foes might be defied.

A somewhat detailed description of the nature and workings of bad spirits is found in the legend of the *Archangel Michael*. This legend, part of which seems to be of Norman origin,[3] turns on the miracles to which the shrines on

[1] *St. Margaret*, v. 165, *et seq.*
[2] *St. Dunstan*, v. 70, *et seq.*
[3] All indications go to show that the legend of the apparition of St. Michael on

Mount Gargan and the rocky island of Tumba owe their existence. Then directly follows the account of Michael's fight with the dragon, the evil one, whom the archangel flings down from heaven into hell. The poet next enters upon a demonological excursus. His theory blends ancient ecclesiastical traditions and echoes from Teutonic paganism. We learn of the ten angel hierarchies, of the fall of Lucifer and his followers, and how God created the race of man to fill the void left in the primitive order; all this is in accordance with the system of Gregory the Great, as Caedmon had already presented it in English verse. We are also instructed in the various transition stages from good to bad spirits, and as to the abode and fortunes of each species. We hear of the agency of demons, of the nightmare that rides men at night, of the elves that inhabit the woods by day, the high hills by night, and are often seen in secret places in great numbers, dancing and playing. The poet exhaustively discusses the power of the devil over men, and his manner of tempting them. Before the birth of Christ, the evil one was able to do what he would; had he then been as fierce as afterwards, hardly one would have escaped. But his fury and his hunger have grown since Christ bound him, as when one chains a dog. Woe to the man who approaches him, who turns his thoughts to evil! Him he endeavours to draw to himself, first by the little finger (Luttle mon), in that he shows forth the insignificance of the intended sin; next with the "Leech" (the ring-finger, so called because physicians tested medicine with it), by reminding him of God's goodness and mercy. If this does not ensnare, he employs "Longueman," the middle finger, telling men a very long life lies before them in which to repent of sins. Then the "Techere's" turn comes, pointing to the sins of others, especially of saints. At last the evil one tempts with

Mount Tumba (Mont Saint Michel) was developed by the Normans and applied, as parallel, to the apparition on Mount Gargan. According to Odo of Glanfeuil's *Historia translationis S. Mauri* (863), there was, it is true, a local tradition in the territory of Avranches, in pre-Norman times, that connected the name of the archangel with that place (*de loco sancti angeli Michaelis qui Ad duas vocatur Tumbas, Acta SS. Jan.* 15, *I.* 1052). But what this tradition really was is not known, and the writers of the ninth century making mention of the apparition on Mount Gargan, allude in no way to the other vision, even including those who lived near the spot where it is said to have appeared. That part of the legend pertaining to Mount Gargan was well known to the Old English church as early as the days of Beda. The most ancient English account of it is probably found in the *Blickling Homilies*, p. 197, *et seq.*

"Strongue," the thumb: "Thou art strong enough to repent much greater sins than these."

Fortunately for us, the poet does not stop with this theory of demons. He finally gives a complete cosmology, in connection with the description of the abyss of hell, that forms *il fondo dell' universo* with him as with Dante, and lies in the centre of the earth. Many attempts in this direction had been made since the time of Beda, some of them in the English language. Nevertheless, I know of no other work that combines such diverse topics in such small compass. If the poet had no complete text at his disposal, which he only needed to translate, he must have been a man of no slight knowledge. At all events, it is significant that such endeavours were made in the native land and in the age of Roger Bacon.

According to this system, which is based on the Ptolemaic, the earth forms the centre of the universe. It is much smaller than the smallest of the fixed stars, one hundred and sixty-five times smaller than the sun, and nine times larger than the moon. The heavens move in eight spheres around the earth, which is as round as an apple, and is suspended in the universe like the yolk in an egg. The uppermost sphere, immeasurably distant from the centre, is that of the fixed stars; then follow the spheres of the seven planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the sun, Venus, Mercury, the moon. The influence of the planets on the weather and thriving of fruits is immense. Man himself is subject to them in his temperament, his talents, and affections; but his free will gives him the power to follow his impulses or to resist them. The days of the week take their names from the planets, and because Mars and Saturn are powers of darkness, man avoids undertaking anything important on Tuesday (*Tywesday*, *Martis dies*), and on Saturday. The poet discusses in detail the moon and its phases. Underneath the moon-sphere are the four elements: uppermost is fire, then air, then water and earth. The various meteorological phenomena are attractively described. We are told from what proceed thunder and lightning, hail and snow, dew, fog, frost and rime; then is shown the connection of all lakes, fountains, and rivers on the earth with the great ocean that surrounds the land. Finally, the poet reaches man, who, like every organic being,

is composed of the four elements. The temperament of the man is determined as one element or another preponderates in the combination. According to modern speech, the earth would approximately correspond to the phlegmatic temperament, water to the melancholic, air to the choleric, and fire to the sanguine. Psychology is combined with the physiology of man and the account of his development in his mother's womb. The three principal parts of the human organism, liver, heart, brain, correspond to the three souls, which, according to ancient philosophers, are united in man: the vegetative, the animal, and the reasoning soul. The last, which is immortal, suggests theological and devotional reflections, with which the poet closes.

If the legend of *St. Michael* was thus put to use in popularising scientific knowledge, or what passed for it, the legend of *St. Brandan* disclosing the wonder-world of the ocean, gave expression to visionary conceptions of unknown parts of the earth, as they had formed in the mind of the people. Proceeding from mysterious premonition and aspiration, this legend materially aided to keep awake through all the Middle Ages the presentiment of an unknown world and the longing for it, until the discovery of America brought the time of fulfilment.

The lives of the English native saints were well suited to historical retrospection. Despite the element of saga prominent in these legends, also, there was frequent opportunity to impress a bit of history or geography upon the minds of the audience. Thus the biographer of St. Kenelm, like his father, Kenulf, called King of the Welsh Marches, opens with a description of England at the time of the pentarchy, in which especial stress is laid upon the relation of the five kingdoms to the counties and bishoprics.[1]

One legend, however, surpasses all others in historical value, that of the most popular of all English saints, Thomas of Canterbury. This man's political importance, the brief time elapsed since his death, and the wealth of biographical material amassed by Englishmen and Normans, preserved Thomas from becoming an ordinary legendary hero, although they could not, as a matter of course, prevent the belief in

[1] In regard to the source of this geographical introduction see page 279.

the marvellous, nor deter the uncritical spirit from embellishing and distorting the facts of his life.

At all events, the life of Thomas Beket, by its historical tone and its detailed narrative, deserves exceptional rank among the legends of the *Cycle*, which it most worthily closes.[1]

One of the oldest manuscripts containing the *Cycle* has two additional legends appended to the life of *St. Thomas:* those of *Judas* and of *Pilate.* The tradition of the lives of these two men gives much that is strange and horrible, but little that is poetical and striking, or original. They appear strangely out of place in such dignified company, but their histories nevertheless belong to the same range of ideas and conceptions. The form and style of these two legends also entirely pertain to the lives of the saints.

The style of the *Legend-cycle* is defined by the metrical form of the Alexandrine couplet. This determines the construction of sentences, the transitions, the formula-like repetition of many turns and expletives. A certain similarity of style proceeds from this through all the legends, different as their contents and significance may be. Supported by the identity of the language, and the relationship of the materials, this resemblance has even given rise to the theory that the whole *Cycle* is the work of one composer, a theory that more exact research utterly destroys. We discern various clearly defined individualities in the treatment of the subject-matter, in the greater or less fondness for certain groups of ideas, and in views and knowledge. Neither does this diversity fail to appear in metrical and phraseological details. As regards talent for poetical form, these legend-poets, it is true, seem to stand at about the same level. The somewhat halting verse corresponds with a rather clumsy style, whose redeeming trait is its *naïveté.* There is no trace of the copious diction, of the impassioned tone, that we find in more ancient alliterative lives of the saints. The monotonous narrative proceeds with severe plainness, with no poetical ornament, no chance elevation of tone, and no elegance or finish. The feeling or reflection of the poet breaks forth but fitfully and without giving his verse loftier swing. As if by accident, form and thought are now and then congruous,

[1] The feast of St. Thomas falls on the 29th of December.

yielding a stronger effect. In some places it is the poetry of the subject-matter which, not impeded by the unadorned treatment, moves our hearts. Indeed, the loyal faith, the pious feeling of these poets, is well able in itself to affect us in like manner.

The phenomenon of this co-operation of many with one thought and to one end is most significant. It shows us that the spirit which created the English chronicle in the ninth century, had not quite vanished from English cloisters in the thirteenth.

A kind of national historiography also reappeared under Edward I. At the head of the newer historical writers stood a monk of the monastery designated as the probable centre of the cyclic legend-poetry.

Robert of Gloucester was born during the reign of Henry III. He survived the eventful years of the civil war, and was profoundly impressed by it. He describes from fresh recollection, in his chronicle,[1] the dismal weather that wrapped the land in darkness, the cloud-covered sky, from which heavy rain drops slowly fell, when, thirty English miles away from the poet, raged the bloody battle of Evesham (August 4th, 1265)—the battle where Simon de Montfort found his death, and the standard of the barons sank. It was perhaps in part due to these youthful impressions that Robert later resolved to write the history of his country. He found many incentives to this in his monastery. The busy activity there in the composition of legends, presupposes a many-sided study of Middle Latin literature, and perhaps of French literature within a certain range. Historians, biographers, annalists, and chroniclers were doubtless read there, or were at least accessible. Robert as poet was much less gifted than Laȝamon, but had in him more of the scholar. Archæology, topography, ethnology, and topics of political economy roused his interest. He was everywhere tempted to compare the past with the present. His erudition was not especially great, nor his field of vision broad, nor his insight very keen; but he was a man of warm feelings, and was clear-sighted within his sphere. He was fain to discern the finger of God in historical events; his moral standard of measurement was strict, but not illiberal.

[1] Ed. Hearne, p. 560.

Although devoted to the interests of the church, he was a a good Englishman. Party considerations and prejudices clouded his judgment less than they obscure that of many a prominent historian. It was always his aim to distribute praise or blame according to merit.

If Robert felt called to be an historian, and was resolved to write English for Englishmen, he had a pattern in the *Life of Thomas of Canterbury*, which he could follow in form and style.

He seems to have begun the work during the last decade of the thirteenth century. His *Chronicle* was not completed before 1297, perhaps not until 1300.

The work embraces the history of Britain from the earliest times, that is, from the Trojan war, to the close of the reign of Henry III. Nearly half of it is devoted to the fabulous period of the British kings. For this portion Robert follows his original, Geoffrey of Monmouth, with great fidelity, but ignores several passages having little interest for him; besides Geoffrey, he occasionally takes counsel of his Norman translator, Wace. The Old English period has the least space in the chronicle, and Robert here conforms to William of Malmesbury, and to Henry of Huntingdon as a subordinate authority. His work grows more detailed with the Norman Conquest, when his sources begin to yield more abundantly. He makes use of Ailred de Rievaux, the *Annales Waverlienses*, the French poem *La Estoire Aedward le rei*, Wace's *Roman de Rou*, and many other writings. For the time of the civil wars under Henry VI., he mainly follows Rishanger's *Chronicon de bello Lewense*. Legends of national saints in English are also among his sources; principally *The Life of Thomas Beket*, from which he transcribes several lines word for word.[1]

Robert writes in the verse and style of the *Legend-cycle*. His chronicle lacks poetical value. He has not learned the art of story-telling; and the epic genre does not especially attract him. He often studies brevity in the narration of events, dwelling only on certain details. When he describes or argues, when he looks over the past, or into the future, when he compares and gives judgment, he is in his element.

[1] That the composer of *St. Thomas* did not, by any chance, draw from Robert, can be as plainly proved, as that Robert himself was not its author.

Archæological and topographical detail, moral reflections, and the like are the most interesting parts of his work.

Robert is a patriot, enthusiastic for England's fame and greatness, and filled with the warmest interest in her well-being. He opens his work with a eulogy of England, that recalls the celebrated passage in Shakspere's *Richard II.*; not indeed on account of poetic perception and expression, but because of the sentiment that underlies it:

> England is a very good land, I ween, of all lands the best. It is set at the end of the world in the far West. The sea goes all about it, it stands an island. It need fear its foes the less, save it be through guile of people of the country itself, as has of yore been seen. From south to north it is eight hundred miles long, and four hundred (200?) miles broad, going from east to west in the middle of the land, and not as on one end. One may see plenty of all good things in England, if the folk do not spoil them, or the years be worse. For England is full enough of fruit and of trees, of woods and of parks that it is a joy to see, of fowls and of beasts, both wild and tame; of salt fish and also fresh, and fair rivers thereto. Of wells sweet and cold enough, of pasture and meadow, of silver ore and of gold, of tin and of lead, of steel, of iron and of brass, of good corn in great abundance, of wheat and of good wool, better there is none. Waters it also has good enough, but before all others three, from the land into the sea, that are as arms, whereby the ships may come from the sea and go, and bring on land enough of good, in nearly each place: Severn and Thames, Humber is the third, and there is, as is said, the pure land in the middle.

After the rivers come the islands, and next the cities. This leads the poet to historical and political ground. He enumerates the peoples who have in turn invaded and conquered England: Romans, Picts and Scots, "English," and Saxons, Danes; "the fifth time England was won by the folk of Normandy, who dwell among us yet, and shall forevermore. . . . . ." The next section is devoted to political geography. We learn the names of the four British kingdoms, of the thirty-five "shires" of the Angles and Saxons, of the seventeen bishoprics (including Wales, twenty); we are instructed in the relation of the five Anglo-Saxon kingdoms developed from the heptarchy, to the counties and the episcopal dioceses, and hear that the king of Wessex finally became sole ruler in the land. The following extract, bringing out the peculiar advantages of the single cities or districts of England, is especially interesting: "In the country of Canterbury is the greatest plenty of fish;

and the most important chase for wild beasts is around Salisbury; at London the most ships; and wine at Winchester; at Hereford sheep and cattle; and fruit at Worcester; soap about Coventry; iron at Gloucester; metal like lead and tin in the country of Exeter. York has the fairest wood, Lincoln the fairest men, Grantbridge and Huntingdon the greatest quantity of moor-land, Ely the fairest place, Rochester the most beautiful aspect. Opposite France stands the country of Chichester, Norwich against Denmark, Chester against Ireland, Durham against Norway." The three wonders of the land are named, and then the four great military highways. At the close Robert enlarges upon the superior qualities of the English race, resulting from the nature of the country. People in England are handsomer, whiter, and of purer blood than elsewhere; the great evil "that devours the bones of the body as if they were burned" does not come thither, and those from France who suffer from it and are brought to England soon recover: "from that one can see that England is the best of countries; just as it is I write."

This description of the country vividly recalls the like accounts with which Robert's Latin predecessors since Beda had been wont to open their historical works,[1] and especially Henry of Huntingdon. But Robert had other authorities at his disposal. There had long been special compositions, in both prose and verse, that treated either the *mirabilia Britanniae*, or the political and ecclesiastical divisions of the country.

Robert accepts the great event of the Norman Conquest, first as a fact, then as a divine judgment. He regards Harold through the distorting medium of Norman tradition; but William is to him not the legitimate ruler (this was rather Edgar the Aetheling), nor is he in entire sympathy with the conqueror. He does justice to his bravery, and to his stringent rule, but he strongly denounces his cruelty and his violence. The enriching of Norman monasteries with English property is not at all to his mind. He proves himself an Englishman throughout, and an advocate of the common people. He considers the rule of the Normans in England

[1] The later editions of the Old English *Annals* are also introduced by such a description of the country, derived from Beda.

definitely established; he does not regard their posterity as foreigners; but he laments that they, and following their example, all the aristocracy, speak French. Nowhere else in the world, he says, is it customary to speak another language than the mother-tongue. But it is indeed well to understand French as well as English, "for the more one knows, the more he is worth."

Robert naturally took the part of the barons in the civil war in the reign of Henry III. He did not describe the reign of Edward I. But he survived a great part of that momentous epoch in which the forces began for a shaping of affairs whereby many of the hopes of English patriots were to be fulfilled.

We know next to nothing of the circumstances of our chronicler's life. The question whether Robert produced other writings besides his chronicle must remain for the present unanswered. It is very probable that he wrote a few legends before he composed his great work. Nothing, however, justifies the assumption that the incitements which called forth the *Cycle*, came from Robert. The theory, moreover, that he himself composed the whole *Cycle* can be most positively disproved.

Certain it is that Robert wrote his chronicle at a time when a large part of the English *liber festivalis* already existed, but when it was far from completed. And as in his historical work sure traces are to be found of his use of several legends, particularly the legend of *St. Thomas*, we encounter, on the contrary, in other lives of the saints, passages taken from the chronicle: thus the composer of *St. Kenelm* gives, in his geographical opening, nothing but an extract from Robert's introduction.

Robert's example exerted no slight influence upon later English historiography. But not everything attempted after him in this field was incited by his example. A rich chronicle-literature in English verse began to unfold with the commencement of the fourteenth century. Works of greater or less extent (some condensing the entire history of England upon a few leaves) attested the interest felt by the English people in their history—an interest revived by an epoch which established constitutional liberty upon a basis of self-government.

V.

The substance of didactic poetry proper consisted of sermons and religious treatises, which frequently appeared, as before, in rhythm.

A certain class of material, in this field, came ever more prominently into the foreground.

Now the theme is the baseness, the detestableness, of this earthly world, of material existence that ends in dust and decay. The mortal part of man, in all its unæsthetic qualities, is portrayed with glaring colours, and graphic and vigorous expression. The preachers are fond of accompanying man from the moment of his conception to the grave, and contrasting the self-sufficient pride that fills the short earthly life of this creature, with his weakness and nothingness, the loathsomeness of both his origin and his end, the dangers and sufferings that oppress him. St. Bernard is often cited in such connection, on the ground of writings either genuine, or wrongly ascribed to him. But the most far-reaching influence in this direction was, perhaps, exerted by the work of the third Innocent: *De contemptu mundi sive de miseria humanae conditionis libri tres.*

Again, in contrast to the vanity and fleetingness of earthly happiness, eternity is delineated, the hereafter in heaven and hell. The last judgment and the signs that shall precede it are dwelt upon with especial fondness, as was the case in Old English poetry. Touching these legends, a tradition had formed, of which the substance was stable, but left room for many variations in detail. The first three gospels and the fourth book of Ezra are its principal sources. There are usually fifteen signs, each being connected with a special day, but the number seven also appears. The more detailed tradition was frequently attributed to St. Jerome in the Middle Ages. But whoever first established it, it is certain that French models often underly the English representations of the fifteen signs.

Love must accompany the fear aroused by the portrayal of the last day. Hence to awaken love, the preacher, talking to the people, points to Christ's passion and death, depicting them with reference to the fall of man.

The end sought is to move the sinner to repentance, and

through it, to penance. To enlighten the conscience, duties, virtues, and sins are discussed with subtle distinctions and great detail; the Ten Commandments and the Seven Deadly Sins form the basis of classification.

These themes perhaps recur most frequently, and are most characteristic of the epoch. But much other material is connected with them, above all the doctrine of the sacraments. Encroachments are sometimes made upon profane science; as when astronomy is brought to bear in the description of heaven.

Let us look at the question of form. The short couplet is a common metre for all writings of this sort. But strophic forms were also used, especially, it would seem, in the south.

A poet of the second half of the thirteenth century, who has left us a short cycle of sermons, employs a strophe of four eight-syllabled lines with alternating rhyme. Another introduces a poem in short couplets with a few strophes in *ryme couee*.

The choice of such forms shows a tendency to the lyrical genre, and this is also discernible in the tone and style of these poems. We saw that the lyrical and didactic classes oftentimes blended in the preceding period. But we find much more striking examples of such a commixture in the present division. It would be hard to point out another poet in whose work form and contents are so entirely at variance, as with William de Shoreham.

William de Shoreham wrote at the time of Edward II. in the language of Kent, to which county he belonged. The little village of Shoreham, near Otford, was doubtless his home. He was probably for some time a monk at the priory of Leeds. Walter Raynolds occupied the archiepiscopal throne at Canterbury from 1313 until 1327, and when he invested the prior and convent of Leeds with the neighbouring rectory of Chart-Sutton, William was sent thither as a vicar. Here he seems to have spent the rest of his life.

His poems belong for the most part to the field of religious didactics. The most important of them supplement each other, yet they were evidently not composed according to a fixed plan, or in systematic order. They were written as need arose, or to satisfy some express wish that chanced to be heard. A plan may have developed in the progress of

the work. A poetical treatise on the *Seven Sacraments* begins the collection. Of these the sacraments of the communion, of penance, the *sacramentum ordinis*, and marriage are exhaustively discussed: With reference, perhaps, to the sacrament of penance, William later treated in verse the Ten Commandments, and next the Seven Deadly Sins. So far he moved quite within the usual course. It seems, however, that peculiar phenomena in his time, perhaps in his vicinity, caused him to add a poem that touches the foundations of the whole edifice of church doctrine, and the deepest mysteries of faith. The poet imagines himself in the presence of a skeptic who does not believe in redemption, immortality, nor even in God. He seeks to convert him by proving, or illustrating, from speculative philosophy, the existence of God, the Trinity, the creation of the world, the fall of the angels, the fall of the first man, and original sin.

The philosophic vein, which is most marked in this poem, often crops out in the others. William was plainly a thinker, an educated theologian. He was well versed in dogma, as in ethics. He had looked deep into the human heart. At the same time he had a decided leaning to a mystical and allegorical interpretation of scriptural passages and forms of worship; although he by no means disdained the moral application.

He handled language and verse with apparent ease, and as he had something to say and possessed warm sensibilities, his poems do not lack effective passages.

He was not a poet in the higher sense of the word. A poet would hardly have made such a mistake in the choice of a form for his material. William clothed his theological discussions in song strophes. The strophe of the last poem consists of six lines on the principle of the *ryme couee;* in the remaining three it is founded upon the catalectic tetrameter (or *septenarius*), domesticated in England by the *Poema morale*. The *septenarius* is sometimes employed as a long line, and sometimes divided by middle-rhyme, as in the *Seven Deadly Sins*. In the poem on the *Sacraments* the *cauda* (latter part of the strophe) is, in the favourite English manner, introduced by a little verse, with one accent.

Other poems, more or less divergent, stand between the four principal ones in the collection; they are a translation

of the *horae canonicae*, a poem on the *Joys of the Holy Virgin*, and a *Song to the Virgin*. In this last, William gives a specimen of pure lyrical poetry. But we can only judge of his talent for form, since he worked after an original of Robert de Grosseteste. The poem most illustrative of the author's manner is perhaps that on the *Joys of the Virgin*, which he composed at the wish of a nun. This material was suitable for lyrical treatment, as may be proved by more than one example from the last period. Nor is the lyrical element wanting in William's strophes, but the epico-didactic is much more conspicuous.

That form of didactics belonging to the future English prose did not greatly flourish in the present period. Again, it is in Kent that we discover some traces of its cultivation. Two Kentish prose works claim special attention, both giving proof of the high degree in which the culture of this county was influenced by its neighbour, France. At the beginning of the period rose a cycle of short and admirable *Homilies*, after the French of the celebrated homilist, Maurice de Sully. Of these, only five are preserved. Towards its close an Augustine monk at Canterbury, Dan (Dominus) Michel, born at Northgate, wrote a comprehensive treatise with the title *Ayenbite of Inwyt;* that is, the sting (*remorsus*) of conscience. Dan Michel, too, followed a French original. His source was the work of the Dominican friar Lorens, *Le somme des Vices et de Vertue*. This is said to have been written in 1279, for the use of King Philip III. of France, and it later became very popular in England, being often imitated in prose and verse.

The version of Michel of Northgate is still more interesting, since we are told the time of its origin to a day, and possess it apparently in the composer's own handwriting. At the end of the work we read the following:

L'Envoy: Now shall ye know how it has come to pass that this book is written in the English of Kent. This book is made for unlearned ("lewd") people, for fathers and mothers and other kin, to shield them from all manner of sin, that in their conscience no foul thought may remain. "Who (is) like God"[1] is his name called who has made this book. God give him the bread of the angels of heaven, and thereto his help, and receive his soul when he is dead. Amen.

Observe, that this book is finished on the Vigils of the holy apostles,

[1] Mi ka êl.

Simon and Jude, by a brother of the monastery of St. Austin of Canterbury, in the year of our Lord 1340.[1]

The *Ayenbite of Inwyt* is essentially a popular handbook of moral theology, having special reference to the reception of the sacrament of penance. The writer begins with a discussion of the Ten Commandments, and next takes up the twelve Articles of Faith. In accordance with tradition, an article is attributed to each apostle; Matthew the Evangelist taking the place of the betrayer Judas as the author of the eighth article, pertaining to the last judgment. The further course of the treatise follows the vision described in the thirteenth chapter of the Apocalypse. The seven heads of the beast are the Seven Deadly Sins, which are described with their subdivisions. Offences against the Ten Commandments correspond to the ten horns. The poet then rather abruptly proceeds to expound the art of dying, and the art of distinguishing good from evil, which gives rise to digressions on mind and knowledge, and on the five senses. Further, the good is contrasted with the evil manifested in the Seven Deadly Sins. The number seven is used also in the analysis of the good; it is connected with the petitions of the Paternoster corresponding to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

There is a strong vein of allegory in the *Sting of Conscience*, as in the poems of William de Shoreham. The composer occasionally inserts tales and anecdotes, and sometimes stories of the saints; but he is more sparing in this respect than many another writer in the same field.

No real progress can be discovered in Dan Michel's style, compared with that of more ancient homilists. Neither of the two writings can approach the animated, graphic manner of the *Ancren Riwle*.

Among the shorter pieces, following the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* in Michel's manuscript, is a Kentish version of the beautiful allegory *Sawles Warde* (compare p. 204). This is significant, for it points to a connection between this later Kentish prose and the more ancient prose that flourished on West Saxon territory in the first half of the thirteenth century.

It almost seems as if the activity in legend-poetry and

[1] Ed. R. Morris, p. 262. The *Envoy* is in verse, while the closing remark is in prose. The short preface and a part of the prologue are also in verse; the treatise itself is entirely in prose.

theological prose, then evident in Dorset and contiguous counties, afterward branched out from its original soil in two directions, without, however, entirely deserting its native place.[1] The legend moved to the north, to the boundary of the southern dialect, and the prose toward the east.

Was it the influence of eminent abbots or bishops that invested Gloucester and Canterbury with increased powers of attraction as abodes of national ecclesiastical culture?

VI.

After the beginning of the fourteenth century, however, the main centre of this culture lay no longer within the range of the southern dialect, but in the north, in Northumbria, and in Lincolnshire, which, lying on the south side of the Humber, was the linguistic as well as literary link between the north and the eastern midland.

The Anglian territories, as a whole, had taken no conspicuous part in the national literature during the centuries immediately following the Conquest. The most active impulse for new poetical forms, and the working of new materials, proceeded from the south. Nevertheless, productions like those yielded by North Mercia and East Anglia, like the *Ormulum* or *Genesis* and *Exodus*, are of moment. But Northumbria, originally the principal seat of Christian poetry, hardly gave a sign of life in that transition period.

The second half of the thirteenth century saw the north awake. A Northumbrian translation of the Psalms, in couplets, appeared, which, despite a certain hardness and stiffness, attracts by its vigorous diction.

The vocabulary of this work contains but very few Romanic elements. It was long before French influence took hold upon national culture in these districts. The number of French-speaking inhabitants continued to increase until towards the close of the century. But the Northumbrian clergy, when it did not entirely adopt the foreign culture, maintained its exclusiveness. Under Edward I., the romance writers and *disours* undertook the work of intermedia-

[1] The time and place where Ailred de Rievaux's *Informatio ad sororem suam inclusam* was translated into English by Thomas N. cannot as yet be accurately determined. But we may, perhaps, assume respectively, the first half of the thirteenth century, and the West Saxon territory.

tion. The start thus given by them affected religious poetry.

The beginning once made, the readiness of the northern soil for the foreign seed at once became evident. Many things made here the task of conforming to the Franco-Norman model easier than elsewhere; such as the fusion of the English population with Danish elements, and the advanced state of the language, that had retained many old expressions, it is true, but had discarded or curtailed all but a few inflections. Again, it was in Northumbria that, at a comparatively late time, an Anglo-Norman verse flourished which cannot simply be classed with the forcing-house poetry. Yorkshire produced William de Wadington, the writer of the *Manuel des pechiez*, and Peter Langtoft wrote his continuation of Wace's *Brut* at Bridlington, in Yorkshire, at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

It thus happened that, in the reign of Edward I., the culture of the north became saturated in a surprisingly short time with Romanic elements, a process that resulted at once in a new impetus to religious poetry.

Legends, apocryphal gospels, and the like, were translated into Northumbrian verse from the Latin or the French, and sometimes from southern English dialects. The religious lyric was also cultivated anew, perhaps after the example of northwestern poets. This rise was, however, most plainly manifest in biblical poetry of the grand style, and in the poetical homily. If we bear in mind the *Ormulum* and *Genesis* and *Exodus*, this phenomenon on Anglian ground will be understood.

The prevailing form in the Northumbrian religious poetry, naturally excepting the lyric, was the short couplet. The northern poets handled this metre with great precision, while in the south the talent for form was wont to keep even pace with the poetic gift. In the north, where much skill and elegance were at times coupled with great soberness, a tendency to the counting of syllables and to outward smoothness is discernible, and violence was often done to the Teutonic rules of verse and accent. As with East Anglian writers, and frequently even more strikingly, verse and style remind us of the manner of Norman poets. Like causes may have produced like effects in Northumbria as in Normandy.

It is noteworthy that, among the earliest writers of this epoch and region, stood such a man as the composer of the *Cursor mundi*.

A vast plan was in the mind of this poet, and he realised it not unworthily. He had become familiar with most of the secular poetry popular in his time, with the French romances, their English imitations, and the often frivolous songs of the clerics writing in Latin; but he could find no enduring taste for this literature. Against the vanity and folly of the world, he put the seriousness of the Christian view of life; against sensual love, the adoration of God and the worship of the Holy Virgin. In honour of the mother of God, he resolved to write a poem which should teach of the decree of God as embodied in her, its causes as well as its results, and should represent, from the beginning, the history of the race from which Mary sprang. It was likewise his purpose to help his countrymen, who were put off with French poems little understood by the masses. "It has rarely happened," says he, "that English has been preached in France. Let us give to both nations their own speech, then we shall do no wrong."

The poem undertaken in this spirit is called by its author *Cursor mundi* (*cursur o werld*), because its scope in rapid review includes almost the entire world. In fact, it contains all the chief passages of sacred history, and something besides. Beginning with the Trinity, on which the work is to rest as on a firm foundation, the poet tells of the creation, the fall of the angels, the fall of the first man, and the fortunes of his immediate posterity. Then Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Saul, David, Solomon, pass before us. The prophecies concerning the birth of Christ lead over to the New Testament portion, that begins with Joachim and Anna, and the conception and birth of Mary. Then come Christ's birth, life, passion, death, resurrection, and descent into hell. To Christ's ascension into heaven are joined the feast of Whitsuntide, the history of the apostles, the assumption of the Virgin, and finally the finding of the cross by St. Helena. Then the poet proceeds to the seventh and last age of the world. The coming of Antichrist, the fifteen days before the last judgment, with their terrible signs, and the judgment of the world itself, are now

his themes. But before he lays aside the pen, conforming with the purpose of the poem, he returns to the Holy Virgin, describes her agony at the foot of the cross, and glorifies her miraculous conception.

There is no lack of compositions in the Middle Ages following a plan similar to that of the *Cursor mundi*. Nothing of the kind existed in the English language, however. The most attractive legends and traditions that occupied the age were now first blended for the English people, with the most momentous passages of Bible history. It formed a great fabric in which earlier and later things were interwoven, as promise and fulfilment, picture and reality. The plan of the whole is similar to that of the *Collective Mysteries*, that now began to take form, not uninfluenced by the *Cursor mundi*.

The merit of the poet is so much the greater as he was not in a position to base his poem on any single text, as did the authors of the *Genesis* and *Exodus*, nor did he desire to do so. He collected his material from several writings, though perhaps not from so many as we might assume in our inadequate knowledge of the mediums accessible to him. Aside from Holy Writ, the material was taken from biblical exegetists and homilists; further, many apocryphal books were used, some of them, perhaps, at second-hand. From the New Testament period are the *Pseudo-evangelium Matthaei*, the *Evangelium de nativitate Mariae*, the *Evangelium Nicodemi*, as well as a number of later legends. The *Childhood-Gospel* consulted by the poet was, to say the least, nearly related to the original of the English poem contained in the Laud manuscript, (*le enfaunce Jesu Christ*).[1] More than one version of some legends was accessible to him, as that on the *Finding of the Cross*.

The poet doubtless used French and Norman texts, beside Latin sources, which is shown in the section on the *Fifteen Signs*, preceding the day of judgment. The prophecies of Isaiah are followed by a parable on the *Castle of Love and Mercy*, that is, in all probability, connected with the *Castel d'amour* of Robert Grosseteste.

His style is chiefly epic at the beginning, although discussions, retrospections, and forecastings occur. These gradu-

[1] Published by Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*. Compare pp. 265 and 267.

ally grow more frequent, and a homiletic as well as a lyrical tone is often struck in the New Testament division. The poet preserves a certain symmetry throughout. His narrative is nowhere out of proportion in compass and micrology, but he is careful to avoid a hasty crowding, or summary disposal of things belonging to his scheme. The picturesque details that mediæval poets were wont to supply from fancy are here rarely found; the poet generally keeps strictly to facts, though naturally with the freedom that every narrator of his time allowed himself. It is in this simple garb that the poetry inherent to the subject-matter yields its true effect.

The language of the *Cursor mundi* is clear, fluent, energetic; the verses are well constructed, not only in the North-English, but the southern sense. As a rule, short couplets are used; but when the poet begins to tell of Christ's passion and death, he expands his verse and his rhyme-system, and employs strophes of from four to seven rhymed *septenarii*. This section also contains the burial of Christ, and closes with meditations, finely ending with an impassioned prayer to the Virgin.

Our view of the author of the *Cursor mundi* discloses no great poet, but rather a simple, noble, and virile character, of no mean culture and of decided talent for form.

A powerful influence flowed from this strong personality. The *Cursor mundi*, reproduced in numerous manuscripts, gained friends and readers far beyond the borders of North-umbria. The words that stand at the head of one of these manuscripts:

> This is the best boke of alle,
> The cours of the werlde men dos hit calle,[1]

denote the admiration the work called forth. Probably the example given by the poet greatly aided in the speedy fulfilment of one of his dearest wishes, and preachers began to read English rhymes to the people instead of French. The poetical homily commenced to flourish not long after the composition of the *Cursor mundi*, and in the very district where that poem was written, that is, in the territories belonging to the diocese of Durham.

[1] "This is the best book of all, the course of the world men do it call." MS. Fairfax, 14, Bodleian Library at Oxford. *Cursor mundi*, ed. Morris, p. 8.

The poetical homily became for the north what the legend was to the south. As in the south a legend-cycle was formed, so in the north originated a *Cycle of Homilies* that comprehended the church year. These homilies were mainly constructed according to the scheme familiar to us in the *Ormulum*. There is first a paraphrase of the gospel for the day, with occasional explanations of difficult passages, and then an exhaustive allegorical interpretation of the whole. But in concession to contemporary taste, an edifying tale is further added in these Northumbrian homilies to the interpretation; this is meant to confirm some assertion of the preacher, and is at times very entertaining. It is taken now from Bible narrative, now from saint-legends, and now from the much-embracing class of writings known in France as *contes dévots*.

Latin as well as French sources seem to have been used in the composition of these homilies. St. Gregory is frequently quoted as authority. The occasional citation of Beda may indicate a connection with the old Northumbrian ecclesiastical tradition. The narrative passages, as well as tone and style, plainly bear the impress of the fourteenth century and of Norman influence.

As in the *Ormulum*, the diction of this Northumbrian *Cycle* is prosaic and severe; like the catalectic tetrameters of Orm, the short couplet is constructed more with reference to outward symmetry than to harmony between the rhythm of the verse and that of natural speech. Yet how great is the disparity between these two works in all other respects! How much more flexible and concise is the style of the Northumbrian homilies, and how much more readily does it conform to the metre! This progress in form is largely due to the Franco-Norman school.

The *Cycle of Homilies* underwent many metamorphoses; but several independent poetical sermons or tracts also appeared on topics such as the *Last Judgment*, the *Fifteen Signs*, and the *Seven Deadly Sins*.

The feeling for the marvellous and legendary which the stories in the *Cycle of Homilies* had nourished, soon called forth a *Legend-cycle* in the north, similar to the southern, but independent and differing from it in its verse—the short couplet—and its more concise style. The legend-poetry of

the north, cultivated in close relation to the homily, never reached the development, circulation, and importance which that of the southwest had achieved.

Among poetical versions of apocryphal gospels should be mentioned a Northumbrian *Evangelium Nicodemi*, written in somewhat artistic and cleverly constructed strophes.[1]

Such works as the *Cursor mundi*, the *Cycle of Homilies*, and all others in the same manner, prepared the way for such a writer as the celebrated Hermit of Hampole. Yet, more generally considered, Richard of Hampole presupposes another series of conditions; above all he needs as background a period that, in its depths and its heights, went through a powerful ferment of religious ideas and feelings. Richard, son of William Rolle, was born at Thornton in Yorkshire. His parents sent him to school at an early age. As a youth he found a patron in the archdeacon of Durham, Master Thomas de Neville, who sent him to Oxford. The studies which absorbed Richard there may have been manifold; but the Scriptures were first in importance. He doubtless felt the influence of strong minds in Oxford. The impressions gained there were decisive in forming his life; great sensibility and an excitable fancy were combined in Richard with a pure mind and an inexorable consistency of thought and deed. At the age of eighteen or nineteen he reached the conclusion that the ethical and religious ideal he sought was only to be won at the price of seclusion from the world. He decided quickly; he left Oxford and returned to his parents, but only to say farewell to them. He procured two garments from his sister, a white and a gray one, cut from them a temporary costume, and began his hermit life. His appearance and behaviour made many believe he was insane; but this did not disturb him. Accustomed to follow only his innermost impulses, he soon won respect and veneration. The wish to preach came upon him once in a church, where he assisted unchallenged at the mass. He then had the blessing administered to him by the priest, and mounted the chancel. His words burst from the depths of

[1] The strophe is bipartite. The first division is founded on a system of four catalectic (occasionally acatalectic) tetrameters with the same end and middle-rhymes; the second division on an Alexandrine couplet of six accents, also bound and broken by end and middle-rhyme. The strophe has thus twelve short lines with the following order of rhyme: a b a b a b a b c d c d.

his heart, and they affected his hearers with resistless power; the entire congregation broke into tears. The purity of his life and his strict asceticism soon gave him the fame of sanctity. According to the legend, he healed the sick and cast out devils. He himself believed in these things, and none who came in contact with him in the least doubted them. This shows us the strength of his individuality, as well as the glow of his imagination, which could kindle that of men about him.

Richard's life was chiefly devoted to prayer and meditation; yet he did not forget in this the duties of active philanthrophy. He worked for others by word and deed, consolation and admonition, tongue and pen. When he would pour out the abundance of his thoughts, his pen quickly flew over the sheet, and words came fluently from his lips. He never troubled himself about finish of form. His writings give us, children of the nineteenth century, but a feeble conception of what his words were to his contemporaries. But in them we may guess the forces by which he stirred men orally. The deepest conviction, which sought to express itself in its fulness, overflowing feelings, a mind filled by the religious ideas and images of the time, above all a rich subjective experience; from these things came his power.

Richard's hermit life did not confine him forever to the same spot. He changed his habitation more than once; but he does not seem to have left the diocese of York after his return from Oxford. He dwelt for some time in a small, secluded hut on the estate of Sir John Dalton, a pious knight who had been present in the church when Richard preached his unexpected and eventful sermon, and who, after satisfying himself as to the hermit's sanity, had offered him a cell, and looked after his support. Here, probably not far from his home, Richard wrote a goodly number of his works. He later removed to the county of Richmond. We find him at last in the southern corner of Yorkshire at Hampole, near Doncaster, where he died in 1349. The spot became the goal of many pilgrims, drawn by the fame of his saintly life, and of the miracles which took place at his grave. His memory was greatly honoured by the nuns of the neighbouring Cistercian convent, which drew no small advantage from

the added attractions of the place. It was they who caused to be written an *Officium de sancto Ricardo heremita*, in anticipation of the hermit's canonisation, and its *Legenda* contain nearly all that we know of Hampole's life. They preserved authentic copies of his writings, on iron chains to guard them against mutilation; the Lollards would have liked, it was said, to garble Richard's works over to their views, and support their teachings by his renowned name. Well might it concern the nuns of Hampole to keep the suspicion of heterodoxy far from their local saint.

Had Richard done anything to arouse this suspicion? There was much in his life, in the manner of his appearance, that lay out of the usual course of churchly custom; much that must have been attractive to a sect like the Lollards. Belonging neither to the priesthood nor to any order, he took up the office of preacher and spiritual adviser. When it pleased him, he exchanged the cell for the pilgrim's staff. He formed his whole life, not according to the directions of an external authority, but in obedience to the promptings of an inner voice, which was to him the voice of God.

Yet we cannot perceive in Richard's theological views the slightest deviation from the orthodoxy of that time. He did not doubt the efficacy of the sacraments or of absolution. The pope was to him God's vicegerent, who bore the key to the treasure of the church. He implicitly accepted all dogmas, and in the doctrines of the schools, his guides were the proved, universally received authorities.

Richard belonged to the class of men who combine a childlike reverence for ecclesiastical authority and a naïve acquiescence in transmitted dogmas, with independent fervour of religious life. Like so many other men of that time, he sought his own way, and after he thought he had found it, he did not forsake it again. Yet this way, which was to unite him with God, touched nowhere the field of philosophical theory. The mystical experiences of his contemplative life were confined entirely to the sphere of feeling. Nothing like a philosophical system came from them. Richard was not speculative. He had neither the depth nor originality of thought that would have raised him to the standing-point of the free mystic, as an Eckhart, nor the cast of mind requisite to accommodate the fundamental ideas of

mysticism to the letter of dogma and to the system of scholastic philosophy. Nor did he even feel the need of such a mediation; to him there seemed to be no conflict.

Richard's many writings deal partly with that which formed the heart of his inner life, and they aim partly, in more popular manner, at theological teaching and religious edification. He would be a guide to congenial souls in the path of asceticism and contemplation; or he strives to remind the sinner of the hollowness and misery of life, of God's majesty, kindness, and justice, and of the eternal requital of good and evil deeds. In the former instance he draws from his own experience; in the latter, entirely from books.

Among the writings of the first class, the treatise *De incendio amoris* holds a significant place. The *Officium de sancto Ricardo* gives the following extract from it (I., 3):

In the lapse of time a great increase of spiritual joys was vouchsafed me. From the beginning of my change of life and soul to the vision of the heavenly gates, made that my spirit might contemplate the celestials with the eyes of the heart, and see in what way it should seek its beloved and pant itself to him, there elapsed three years less three or four months. Nearly a year passed while the gate stood open to the time when I was truly sensible of the warmth of eternal love in my heart. I was in a chapel, and while I was delighting in the sweetness of prayer or meditation, I suddenly felt in me an unwonted and blissful ardour. And after I had long wavered, doubting whence it came, I experienced that it was not from a creature but from the Creator; I found it then more fervent and blissful. While this ardour burned sensibly, and with unspeakable sweetness, passed a half year, three months and some weeks, to the inflowing and perception of the celestial, or spiritual tone, which pertains to the eternal hymn of praise and to the sweetness of the unearthly melody; since it cannot be produced or heard save by those who have received it, and such must be cleansed and withdrawn from the world. And while I was in the same chapel, and—it was in the night before the Easter communion—sang as I was able, I heard a sound as of those playing the psaltery, or, rather, of those singing above me. And while I addressed myself with all longing in prayer to the heavenly ones, I know not how, I felt in myself a wondrous concord, and received a most delicious harmony from heaven, which remained with me. For my cogitation was constantly changed into the music of song, and my meditations into hymns. And also in prayers and psalmodies I gave the same sound from me; and furthermore, what I had before said broke forth from the affluence of sweetness into singing; that is, in secret, only before my Creator. This was unknown to those with whom I lived; if they had known it, they would have honoured me overmuch, and I should have lost the most beautiful part of the grace,[1]

[1] The Latin original is unintelligible here, owing to a corruption.

and fallen into desolation. Sometimes wonder seized me that I was thus enraptured and that God had granted me gifts for which, to my knowledge, I had never prayed, and which I did not think were received by the most holy in this life. Hence I conclude that this was given to no one on account of his merits, but that Christ granted it freely to him whom he would. But I also believe that no one will receive this grace if he does not spiritually prize the name of Jesus, and so honour it that he never permit it to leave his remembrance, the time of sleep only excepted. . . . . Thus elapsed four years and about three months from the beginning of my change of soul to the highest point of the love of Christ which I was able to attain through God's grace, at which point I sounded the divine praises in songs of jubilee. This state, with the previous ones, shall abide to the end, and after death it shall be more perfect, since the joy of love that begins here shall receive a most glorious consummation in heaven.[1]

Margaret Kirkby, an anchoress (*reclusa*) of Anderby in Richmondshire, seems to have had no little influence upon Richard's literary activity, especially as regards his writings in English. Hampole had come in contact with her before he left John Dalton's house. Their intercourse was, perhaps, mainly by correspondence. Richard was Mary's spiritual adviser; he instructed her "in the art of the love of God." For her he wrote an English tract (*The boke maad of Rycharde hampole to an ankeresse*), which may be compared in general purpose with the *Ancren Riwle*. He also composed, at her request, an English commentary to the Psalms. There is a Latin version of this commentary, which may also be Richard's work. It was, perhaps, the basis of the English composition. Hampole seems, more than once, to have composed the same work both in Latin and English. But some of the hermit's Latin writings, or fragments of them, may later have found a translator; hence it is not certain that several English treatises ascribed to Hampole actually came from him in this form. So few of his works have thus far been published that an account of his qualities as a writer (at least in prose[2]) cannot be given. No accurate estimate of the extent of his writings can as yet be formed.

Richard's position in English literary history, and as an English poet, rests chiefly upon the *Prick of Conscience (Stimulus Conscientiae)*. There is also a Latin version of this work. But however it may be related to the English

[1] Perry, *Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle de Hampole*, p. XXVII., *et seq.*

[2] This is also true of his lyrical poetry. The poem in strophes published by George G. Perry in *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, p. 79, *et seq.*, seems to me to betray a manner unlike that of Hampole.

composition, there is no doubt that Richard was the author of the latter.

The title and the general purport of Hampole's poem suggest the work of the Kentish monk, Dan Michel, the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, which appeared at about the same time. The ways, however, by which both authors seek the same goal are unlike. Michel would enlighten the sinner, instructing him in the nature of sin and virtue. Richard would bring him to look into himself, reminding him of what he is, whence he came, whither he goes. In his seven books Hampole considers the wretchedness of human nature, the transitoriness of the world, the vicissitudes of life, death, purgatory, Antichrist, the last judgment, hell, and heaven. The ascetic, mediæval view of life finds powerful expression in his poem. He vividly depicts the weakness, ugliness, the loathsomeness of human nature, the terrors of death and the last judgment, and the torments awaiting the sinner beyond the grave; while all the splendour, all the charm of the poet's art are lavished upon the picture of heaven. Unlike Dan Michel, who was content to translate a French work, Hampole joins together what he has gained from different sources into a whole, bearing the stamp of his own personality. The *Prick of Conscience*, the chief of Hampole's more popular works, gives us occasion to recognise the wide reading of the author. It is full of citations from the fathers and ecclesiastical writers. Many of them may have been taken at second-hand. But there remain enough to prove that, though his regular studies ceased early, and his life was mainly ascetic and contemplative, yet he managed to acquire no slight theological culture. Certainly the works to which he was chiefly under obligation were such as had great circulation at that time: works like the *De contemptu mundi libri tres*, by Innocent III., the *De proprietatibus rerum*, by Bartholomew de Glanvilla, the *Compendium theologicae veritatis*, ascribed to various authors, and the *Elucidarium* of Honorius Augustodunensis. There were also many other sources, and among them, English writings. Thus Hampole seems to have used a medical tract, of which we now have but a fragment.

The language of the poem is clear and expressive. Hampole commands a large vocabulary, from which he draws

with lavish hand. He likes to mass synonyms, and does not hesitate to repeat words and turns of expression; nor does he in general proceed with pedantic uniformity, but occasionally looks forward and backward. Making no æsthetic claims, with only the desire to instruct and edify, striving only to make what is black, right black, and what is bright, very brilliant, he has, nevertheless, produced many very effective passages. His verses are flowing, but unlike most northern poets, he does not trouble himself at all about the number of syllables. The verses of his short couplets have always four accents, but often more than four unemphatic syllables. This, too, is characteristic of the man, who was indifferent to external symmetry.

All in all, Hampole is the most notable English religious writer of the first half of the fourteenth century, and he had a corresponding influence upon later religious literature, especially that of the fifteenth century.

A remarkable contrast to Hampole was his older contemporary, Robert Mannyng, the most eminent representative of the literature of Lincolnshire in the first half of the fourteenth century.

We know little of Mannyng's external life. Born at Brunne (now Bourn) near Market Deeping in Lincolnshire, he seems, like Hampole, to have spent by far the greater part of his life within the limits of his native shire. As Gilbertine canon he belonged, from 1288 to 1303 and perhaps longer, to the priory of Brimwake in the hundred of Kesteven, six miles from Sempringham; later, after 1327, he was for a time connected with the priory of Sixhill. He was once in the county and city of Cambridge, how long or when, we do not know, perhaps merely on a visit. The period of his life may be set between the years 1260–1340 or 45.

What kind of a man he was, we may gather from his works. His fame as a writer is based upon two poems, *Handlyng Synne* and a history of England. A poetical translation of a tract by Bonaventura[1] follows the *Handlyng Synne* in both manuscripts containing that poem; but that he wrote it is very doubtful.

[1] Here bygynneth medytacyuns of the soper of oure Lorde Jesu. And also of hys passyun. And eke of þe peynes of hys swete modyr Mayden marye. The whyche made yn latyn Bonauenture Cardynalle. *(De coena et passione Domini et de poenis s. Mariae virginis.)*

Robert was a pious ecclesiastic, yet any propensity to asceticism was far from him. He was ever ready to grant an innocent amusement to others as well as to himself, and especially to the poor. His was an unassuming, genial spirit, with a light touch of humour; he was a friend of music and good stories. He did not ascend to the higher regions of thought, and mystical contemplation was quite foreign to him; but his eye scanned the world around him with all the greater interest; and his view, if not particularly sharp, was very clear.

Robert was curious and even inquisitive; but his curiosity had the background of a warm sympathy for the lot of his fellow-men. Like his namesake of Gloucester, he was the friend and advocate of the poor. High position and birth did not blind him to the faults and vices behind their glitter. He laments that there are so few noble men and so many "lordynges,"[1] and he addresses the nobleman thus:

> Unwrthyly art thou made gentil,
> Yyf thou yn wurdys and dedys be yl;[2]

"Thou art unworthy of thy rank if thou art evil in words and deeds." Still more strongly he insisted on the highest purity of morals in the priesthood, And he seems unwittingly to leave the narrow path of orthodoxy for a moment, when he contends that the effect of a mass read by a pious priest is quite different from that celebrated by a sinful one.

Robert's reading was varied enough. French and English romances (in his youth he had certainly read them; and who knows if not still later?), lives of the saints, and edifying miracle tales, as well as more solid matter; as: Beda's *Ecclesiastical History*, and a number of later English and Anglo-Norman historiographers. It was the antiquarian side of the latter that especially attracted Robert of Gloucester. But what chiefly interested Robert of Brunne in them was perhaps the epic and even the anecdotal element. He had certainly a keener sense for the personal and subjective than for the bare matter of fact. He, too, saw God's finger in history; but while his predecessor deemed the Norman Conquest a judgment on all England, Mannyng discerned in it only the punishment of Harold's per-

[1] *Handlyng Synne*, v. 8716, *et seq.*
[2] *Ibid.*, v. 3040, *et seq.*

jury. Mannyng's writing flowed from no passion for art or learning, nor from ambition to immortalise his name, a thing so much easier to accomplish in the fourteenth than in the nineteenth century. His writings had no other object than to please plain people, in an innocent and useful way to entertain them during their hours of recreation.

Both of Mannyng's works are adaptations of Anglo-Norman originals, whose authors lived in Yorkshire, and died during his lifetime.

The *Handlyng Synne*, which was written in 1303, is founded upon the *Manuel des Pechiez* of William of Wadington (Waddington). Robert could hardly have procured a more fitting book for his purpose. It deals with the same subject as the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, and follows a similar plan. The poet successively considers the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Seven Deadly Sins, and the Seven Sacraments, after which he comes back to the topic of penance and discusses at length the Twelve Requisites of a good confession, as well as the Twelve Graces that flow from it. William seems to have drawn from a Middle Latin poem in elegiac measure, entitled *Floretus*, and also from a *Sume des Vertus et des Pechiez* whose relation to the original of the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* is still a problem. But it is the popular character of William's work which most decidedly distinguishes it from that of the Kentish monk. There is much less theoretical discussion, while the thought is made clear, and is verified by a mass of anecdotes—tales from the *Vitae Patrum*, the *Dialogues* of Gregory, from Beda, and many other sources. Mannyng works over this material with much independence. He leaves untranslated the articles of faith at the beginning, a long piece of moralising in the middle, and a mass of observations and prayers at the end. The rest he gives faithfully, on the whole; but in no respect does he restrict himself to the letter of the original. He sometimes curtails and omits, but as a rule, he amplifies. Things he has observed, conjectures and reflections that came upon him, are never reserved. He retains his independence especially in the narrative portion. At times he sets aside a story for one quite different, or gives the same story in another and ampler setting; or he inserts a tale from other authors. He takes this new matter partly from Beda, partly from the lives of the

saints and similar writings, and partly from oral communication. He often indicates the scene of the action, which in that case does not lie very far from his own home, as the counties of Cambridge, Norfolk, and Suffolk. The scene of one tale is in his immediate neighbourhood, Kesteven.

The whole receives at his hands a truly national and at times a local impress. Social relations, customs, and usages of the time and country are blended into one effective picture.

Like his original, Robert employs the most unassuming of all metres, the short couplet, which he wields in the manner of the Northumbrian poet. His style is simple and clear, somewhat more prolix and graphic than William's, but always rather terse. He has a certain skill in narration, which rouses and increases the interest. But compared with such poets as the authors of *Dame Siriz* or of the *Fox and Wolf*, he is stiff and dry.

Mannyng was incited to write his *History of England* by Robert of Malton, who was probably prior of Sixhill. This work belongs to a later period of his life; it was finished in May, 1338. His chief source was the rhyming chronicle of the canon of Bridlington in Yorkshire, Peter, or as Robert calls him, Pers of Langtoft.

Langtoft had first rendered a portion of Wace's *Brut*, and then, with the help of other writings, continued the *English History* to the death of Edward I.

Mannyng, who had access to Wace's poem, preferred to prepare the history of the British kings according to the fuller account of the original, rather than the curtailed work of the compiler. Wace's temperament was in many respects like his own; his unpretentious and perspicuous, but not inelegant, diction attracted Mannyng, not less than the full details with which he tells the stories of the age of the English kings. Where Wace ceased, Mannyng turned to Langtoft, and followed him very loyally to the end. But he often consulted older and more trustworthy authorities, and allowed himself some deviations and additions. He also interpolated native legends. He was acquainted with the romance of *Havelok*, and we see from his allusion to the fortunes of this hero, that the saga was then still far from extinct in Lincolnshire. But the good Robert was greatly aston-

ished to find that his authorities said nothing of it. This roused his distrust, and he hastened to drop the subject. He was plainly ignorant of the English history of Gaimar, and of the works of many later historians who were less open to critical scruples than he, as the compilation written in Anglo-Norman prose in 1310 by Master Rauf de Boun for Henry de Lacy, count of Lincoln; the short contemporary genealogy of the British and English kings from Brutus to Edward II.; and the larger *Brut*, likewise in Anglo-Norman prose, and written in the thirties of the century. *Havelok* is also barely mentioned in a very summary chronicle from Brutus to 1313, written in short English couplets, which was soon after continued to the time of Edward III.

The growing taste for national history was not accompanied by a growth of the true historical sense. The increasing popularisation of history caused, in the beginning, a decline of historical criticism. The romances of chivalry yielded rich material for the historiographers, the most of whom willingly embodied it in their writings. Guy of Warwick and his victorious fight with Colebrand, of which we learn nothing in Robert of Gloucester's chronicle, was put by Langtoft and Mannyng quite in the same category with Aethelstan and the battle of Brunanburh. Wace, and after him Mannyng, made a rather unfounded but useful distinction between the statements of Geoffrey of Monmouth in his Latin history and the Arthurian romances. The logic of things gradually obliterated this boundary. In an uncritical age everything depends upon the trustworthiness of authorities. So long as historical works were mainly written in Latin, this tendency to fiction was restricted. But with the appearance of every writing in the national language, the line between the guild of the learned historiographers and the romancers grew more indistinct. The latter also professed, as a rule, to relate actual events.

As historian, Robert of Brunne stands far below Robert of Gloucester. He is less well informed, less independent, his conception of things less clear and certain.

Yet he somewhat excels him in metre, especially in that part of his work where, following Wace, he moves with ease and skill in short couplets. But the Alexandrines which Robert of Brunne, after Langtoft, employs in the second

part, are less uneven and more like the French form than those of his predecessor. He is wise enough to turn the single-rhymed strains of his original into Alexandrine couplets. He but rarely uses the same rhyme in a succession of verses. Unfortunately, he begins, at the time of the Conquest, to make use of the middle-rhyme, which he carries out with much regularity to the close. He had found fault in his prologue with the romance-poets who, to show off their art, employed difficult metres *(ryme entrelacee, ryme couee,* etc.); forms which the *disours* were accustomed to mutilate in their recitations, and which, combined with involved and heterogeneous language, were not intelligible to the people. Now he himself falls into this mistake, for which he has to pay dearly at once. To satisfy the greater demands of rhyme he often takes refuge in bold inversions and abrupt expressions, which make his writing very obscure and difficult.

Nevertheless, Mannyng's chronicle has much that is attractive and instructive, though this is, indeed, due more to the originals than to the compiler. Langtoft's work is not without historical value, especially in the account of the time of Edward I.; it contains an abundance of details, and gives many a tradition, and many a political folk-song that were adopted by the English translator.

Robert of Brunne is without doubt one of the writers who served most to spread the East-Midland dialect toward the south. And through him many new Romanic words were probably either introduced into the English literary language, or at least established there. His vocabulary contains numerous foreign elements, many more than that of the slightly earlier Robert of Gloucester. With such rapidity had the north assimilated the Norman culture, which it first repulsed.

Mannyng influenced the growth of literature chiefly by his *Handlyng Synne,* one of the most entertaining and instructive books that Old England has bequeathed us.

VII.

Manifold points of contact between religious and secular poetry have already appeared in the present division of our researches. We have hardly touched, however, upon the

field in which the two appear most intimately related; viz, the lyric.

In this field, too, religious poetry prepared the way. In the last period we saw its writers introduce new forms and themes that, borrowed partly from the Middle Latin, partly from Norman art-poetry, were largely of secular origin.

When the English lyric had again won honours on religious ground, it was not long before the secular lyric began to strive for the same laurels. There were many minds that united a bright and freshly concrete conception of life with literary culture; above all among the itinerant clerics. And mainly among them we have to seek the fosterers of English song in the present period.

The itinerant clergy knew life as well as the schools, and came into contact with the most diverse classes. Their roving, careless, and oftentimes dissolute life invested them with the cleverness of the man of the world, though it was borne with a somewhat plebeian air; their intercourse with nature and the people kept the mind fresh with a sense for the naïve expression of feeling.

Not less at home in Paris than in Oxford, they were generally acquainted with French as well as English and Latin, and doubtless knew by heart the most piquant love-songs and drinking-catches of the former. Englishmen, both of Norman and English descent, perhaps early came fraternally together in these merry circles. At their drinking-bouts in the tavern, a Babylonian confusion of tongues saluted the ear of the honest burgher, shaking his head as he passed by. This commingling of languages is illustrated in the following song, in which the English element appears only at the close. The composer was an English student residing in Paris.

Dum ludis floribus velut lacinia
Se dieu d'amour moi tient en tiel *angustia,*
Morir m'estuet[1] de duel e de *miseria,*
Si je ne l'ay *quam amo super omnia.*

Ejus amor tantum me facit fervere,
Que je ne soi *quid possum inde facere;*
Pur ly covent *hoc saeculum relinquere,*
Si je ne pus l'amour de li *perquirere.*

[1] Wright, *Specimens of Lyric Poetry*, p. 64, has *Merour me tient*, which I do not understand.

Ele est si bele e gente dame *egregia,*
Cum ele fust *imperatoris filia,*
De beal semblant *et pulcra continencia,*
Ele est la flur *in omni regis curia.*

Quant je la vey, je su *in tali gloria,*
Come est la lune *coeli inter sidera,*
Dieu la moi doint *sua misericordia*
Beyser e fere *quae secuntur alia !*

Scripsi haec carmina in tabulis.
Mon ostel est en mi la vile de Paris;
May y sugge namore, so wel me is ;
Yef y deȝe for love of hire, duel hit ys.

The national lyric that now blossomed under the nurture of the English students bears the stamp of the life they led, and of the very heterogeneous influences to which they were exposed. A tone of youthful audacity, genuine and often passionate feeling, and fresh, sometimes coarse, sensuousness, marked their secular songs, that were almost without exception amorous. The form betrays the influence of the Latin strollers' songs and of French love-poetry, as well as of the English religious lyric. Celtic influence is also discernible in a few songs; a great fondness for images and comparisons, united with a certain dithyrambic tone, quickly recurring flashes of feeling and fancy, characterise the very poems that the tokens of language and metre assign to the western counties.

Technical forms appear beside simpler, more popular ones. A folk-tone predominates, however, and is felt even when the strophe is courtly, or when courtly themes are handled. The English folk-song doubtless also acted strongly upon the poetry of the wandering clerics.

Have we no genuine folk-songs from this period? The celebrated *Cuckoo Song*, dating perhaps from the middle of the thirteenth century, seems to yield the full impression of such a poem. But the music to this song,[1] whose notes have been transmitted with the text, betokens a well-advanced development, and its form is relatively very correct. Whoever the author was, he exactly struck the key of the folk-song. The coming of summer, with the awakening of all nature to new life, is described with drastic simplicity and with no admixture of subjective sentiment:

[1] The compocition has the character of the canon.

Sumer is icumen in, lhude sing cuccu!
Groweth sed and bloweth med and springth the wde nu.
Sing cuccu!
Awe bleteth after lomb, lhouth after calue cu,
Bulluc sterteth, bucke uerteth, murie sing cuccu!
Cuccu, cuccu!
Wel singes thu cuccu: ne swick thu naver nu.

The itinerant clerics, to adorn their lyrics, borrowed many traits and turns of phrase from songs of summer and winter, as sung by the people. The love of nature evident in their poems, the landscape-painting that often is the background for personal feeling, markedly deviate from the corresponding elements of French poetry,[1] and have such an English air that they can only be explained by the tradition of the English folk-song. It is plain, at a glance, that the Englishman has a warmer and closer relation with nature than the Frenchman. The French poet is only interested by a certain range of phenomena, out of which he rarely moves. As regards animals, for instance, he almost entirely restricts himself, in the lyric, to singing birds, except for purposes of comparison. And the poet knows no way of combining the expression of his mood and the picture he has sketched by a few touches from nature, save by means of reflection. "Everything rejoices in returning spring, so I must also rejoice in my love;" or, "When the nightingale begins her sweet song, it becomes me to sing mine." The English poet has more varied and richer details at his disposal, and is not wont to form an analogy of his personal sentiments with a certain phase of the life of nature, but rather lets his feelings appear as part of that life.

There is no doubt that whole forms and verses passed from the folk-song to the songs of the clerics. A poem that otherwise contains many non-popular elements has the following burden, very certainly not invented by the poet:

Blow, northerne wynd,
Sent thou me my suetying (sweetheart).
Blow, northerne wynd, blou, blou, blou![2]

There is in the entire poem no other mention of the north wind; it contains no description of nature, but, in six stanzas

[1] This is true particularly of the lyric. In the French epic romances, the love of nature is occasionally shown with the same directness as in the English lyric now considered.

[2] Wright, *Specimens of Lyric Poetry*, No. 16.

full of metaphors and similes, brings out the perfections of the loved one, and depicts in four further stanzas the love-pain of the poet.

The terse language and abrupt transitions of the folk-song characterise these verses throughout. "How shall he sweetly sing who thus in mourning pines? She will bring me to death long before my time. Greet her well, the sweet one with the clear eyes."[1] And in the same poem: "I wish her what is good, she me evil; I am her friend, she is my foe; I believe my heart will break with care and sighing. May she go in God's keeping, the white pearl."

Nearly all of the few love-songs preserved from this period date from the time of Henry III. and Edward I. They originated partly in the midland district, partly in the south; alliteration and rhyme are both frequent and are more regularly used by poets belonging to the Welsh Marches.

Though few in number, these productions[2] present a fair variety of talent and style. A poet who probably lived in eastern Mercia, and composed in the single-rhymed strophes of four long lines, familiar to us in the religious lyric, is distinguished by his simple directness of expression and warmth of feeling. We have a love-plaint from him that begins thus: "When the nightingale sings, the woods wax green; leaf and grass and blossom spring in April, I ween, and love is gone to my heart with a spear so keen; night and day it drinks my blood, my heart doth me tene (hurt)."[3] The same poet wrote a song in dialogue, that is probably meant to represent his own lot. We translate it as follows:

My death I love, my life I hate, all for a lady fair;
She is as bright as the day-light, none can with her compare.
I fade and droop as doth green leaf in summer's sunny air;
If all my thought me helpeth nought, what can I but despair?

Sorrows and sighs and dreary mood hold me enthralled so fast,
That now meseems I shall go mad if it much longer last;
My pain, my care, all with a word she might forth from me cast,
What helps it thee, sweetheart, to see my life thus long harassed?

Away, thou clerk, thou art a fool, with thee I will not chide;
The day I give my love to thee, thou never shalt abide;

[1] Strictly, "with gray eyes," that were considered an especial beauty in the Middle Ages. Wright, No. 11.

[2] We have translated the poems given below, from the originals, for the general reader.—TRANSLATOR.

[3] Wright, No. 32.

If in my bower thou art caught, then shame may thee betide;
'Tis better far on foot to go, than wicked horse to ride!

Ah, well-a-day, why say'st thou thus? Have rue upon my woe!
For thou art alway in my thoughts, wherever I do go,
And if I die for thy love's lack, more shame to thee 'tis so!
Then let me live and be thy love; thy self on me bestow!

Be still, thou fool! I call thee aright, will'st ever words begin?
Thou'rt waited for both day and night, by father and all my kin.
If in my chamber thou art found, they'll stop them for no sin.
Me they will hold, and thee will slay; so death thou mightest win!

O sweet, relent, thou grievest me, thy pity I implore;
For now I am as sad a man as blithe I was before.
In window's shelter we could kiss full fifty times and more;
A fair behest oft makes a man forget his trouble's store.

Alack-a-day, why wakest thou old pain thus ruthlessly?
I loved a clerk once faithfully, and true he was to me;
He was not glad on any day until he could me see;
I loved him better than my life; what boots a lie to thee?

When I a clerk was in the school, much did I know of lore;
From the deep wound dealt by thy love, sharp ache I've felt, and sore;
Far from men's haunt, in pilgrim's garb, I've roamed the wide world o'er;
Have pity on me, lady sweet. Alas, I can no more.

Thou seemest well to be a clerk, for so thou speakest still.
No longer vexing dole shalt feel from my love-wounds, nor ill;
Not father, mother, all my kin, shall hold me from my will,
For thou art mine, and I am thine, thy bidding to fulfil.

Another poet who prefers the tail-rhyme, and whose great liking for alliteration often leads to obscurity, is fond of painting landscapes.[1] A third, since he certainly belongs to the west, makes a still more liberal use of alliteration; he compares, stanza by stanza, his loved one to all manner of precious stones, flowers, birds, and the like.[2] A fourth poet, also from the west, is partial to allegory. The song having the refrain "Blow, northerne wynd" contains the following: "I told to Love how this Beauty had seized a heart that was mine, how her knights—Sighing, Sorrowing, and Thought—had sought me. These three brought me to ruin against the power of Peace. I put further plaints to Love, how Sighing followed me, and Thought threatened to overcome me with mastery if he might, and Sorrowing sore threatened that he, for this Beauty, would lead me in baleful bands until

[1] Wright, Nos. 13 and 14.
[2] *Ibid.*, No. 5.

the end of my life, in spite of every right. Love listened to every word and bent himself over to me and bade me seize the treasure of my heart's weal. 'Beseech the sweetest one,' said he, 'before thou fallest like mud from the foot, that she share with thee, as a precious treasure, what can help thee.'"[1] This recalls the manner of such writers as Thibaut of Navarre.

The standing theme of these songs was praise of the beloved, or love-plaints; but the key-note of feeling varied greatly with the temperament of the bard. Compared with the author of the dialogue given above, how sanguine seems the poet of the following strophes, despite his bitter pain:

Between soft March and April showers,
When sprays of bloom from branches spring,
And when the little bird 'mid flowers
Doth song of sweetness loudly sing:
To her with longing love I cling,
Of all the world the fairest thing,
Whose thrall I am, who bliss can bring,
And give to me life's crown.
A gracious fate to me is sent;
Methinks it is by Heaven lent;
From women all, my heart is bent,
To light on Alysoun.

Her sheeny locks are fair to see,
Her lashes brown, her eyes of black;
With lovely mouth she smiles on me;
Her waist is slim, of lissom make.
Unless as mate she will me take,
To be her own, my heart will break;
Longer to live I will forsake,
And dead I will fall down.
A gracious fate, etc.

All for thy sake I restless turn,
And wakeful hours sigh through at night;
For thee, sweet lady, do I yearn;
My cheeks wax wan in woeful plight.
No man so wise that can aright
Her goodness tell, her beauties bright;
Her throat is than the swan's more white,
The fairest maid in town.
A gracious fate, etc.

Weary as water in the weir,
With wooing I am spent and worn;

[1] Wright, p. 53.

Lest any reave me, much I fear,
And leave me mateless and forlorn.
A sharp, short pain is better borne,
Than now and evermore to mourn.
My love, O fair one, do not scorn,
No longer on me frown!
A gracious fate to me is sent;
Methinks it is by Heaven lent;
From women all, my heart is bent,
To light on Alysoun.

An art-form resembling the Provençal and French romance was not unknown to these poets. The dialogic song we have given is essentially of this kind. The poem of a western minstrel corresponds still more exactly with this form; he tells us of his encounter with a coy country beauty, and gives the dialogue a narrative introduction.[1]

The *estrif* took on lyrical as well as epic garb. A poet of the time of Edward I., writing in *ryme couee* and quite in the lyrical tone, brings before us the quarrel between *Throstle and Nightingale*[2] about the value of women. The thrush despises the gentle sex, and quotes from sacred and profane history (or from saga) a series of examples of female faithlessness and seductive arts. The nightingale does not cease to extol the perfections of woman, but without much effect, until she names the Virgin Mary, when her opponent declares herself conquered. The opening of this poem corresponds nearly word for word with that of a *Spring and Love-song*,[3] whose author we have already called a lyrical landscape-painter.

The religious lyric having, toward the close of the last period, reached a certain stage of courtly art, it was at once turned into other courses by the example of the secular lyric that now appeared. This did it no injury. In assimilating a new style from the erotic songs of the clerics and the folk-songs whence they drew, the religious lyric took up a popular element that in no sense coarsened it; and without losing depth and warmth of feeling, it gained in directness of expression. Perceptive imagery took the place of reflection. A number of motives were taken entire from the national secular lyric. Sometimes the opening words of an amorous

[1] Wright, No. 10.
[2] W. Carew Hazlitt, *Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England*, i. 50, *et seq.*
[3] Wright, No. 13.

song were appropriated, together with the metre and melody.[1]

The influence of the new secular lyric was felt in the construction of the strophe, the diction, the relation of ideas, and their disposal in the strophes.

Religious sentiment also put itself into communication with the life of nature, as in the following:

When I see blossoms bursting,
And hear blithe bird-notes sung,
With sweet love-longing thirsting,
My raptured heart is stung.
All from a love that new is,
That joyous, full, and true is,
My gladsome song hath sprung;
For surely I know this is:
My joys, my hopes, my blisses,
On him alone are hung.

When with myself communing,
Him in my thoughts I see,
Pierced hand and foot, and swooning
With cruel nailings three:
Blood on his head thorn-riven,
To him no woe forgiven,
That I from pain be free:
Well should my heart be aching,
With love his dole partaking,
And sigh and sorry be.[2]

An autumnal mood is expressed in a song, one might almost say a *romanze*, of repentance,[3] beginning thus:

Now wither rose and lily-flower,
That bore sweet savour for an hour,
In summer, that happy tide.
There is no queen so proud in power,
No lady fair so bright in bower,
That death shall not down-ride.
Whoso will lust of flesh forego
And heaven's bliss abide,
On Jesus he his thought bestow,
On him with piercéd side.

From Peterborough one dewy morn,
As I went out with hound and horn,
My folly I bethought;
I mourning turned, and sorrowing,

[1] Compare Nos. 40 and 41 in Wright, and also *Reliquiae Antiquae*, I., 104.
[2] Wright, No. 21.
[3] *Ibid.*, No. 30.

To her that bore high heaven's King,
For mercy her besought:
Lady, O pray thy son for grace,
Who us so dear hath bought,
And shield us from the loathsome place
That for the fiend is wrought.

The following *Winter-Song* so closely joins reflection and perception that the whole becomes an image of subjective feeling:

Winter wakeneth all my care;
Now the leaves wax dry and bare;
Oft I mourn and in despair,
Sigh when comes into my thought,
How this world's joy, it goeth all to nought.

Now it is and now no more,
As if it ne'er had place before.
Man hath truly said of yore,
All goeth but God's will,
We all shall die, though it may please us ill.

Sad thoughts press me sore, I ween,
When I see the fallow green.
Jesus, let thy help be seen.
Go we hence, shield us from hell;
I know not whither I shall go nor how long here I dwell.

The tone of an *Easter-Song*,[1] of which we quote two stanzas, is popular and very original. It probably dates from the last decade of the previous period, and was perhaps less influenced by the erotic songs of the clerics than by the folk-song:

Summer is come and winter gone,
Now days are growing long,
And merry birdlings every one
Rejoice aloud with song.
But strong
Care me hath bound
Despite the joy whose echoing sound
The throng,
All for a child,
That is so mild,
Prolong.[2]

[1] Morris, *Old English Miscellany*, p. 97.

[2] In the original, the order of the rhymes in this first stanza has suffered from textual corruption. V. 6–7 run thus:

Kare me bint
Al wit ioye þat is funde—

It is evident, from a comparison of the other stanzas, that the poet, instead of *is funde*

That stately child, so mild of grace,
And with great glory crowned;
In bosk and bank and woody place,
Hath sought me all around.
Y-found
Then hath he me,
That was for apple of a tree
Fast bound;
But brake the thong
That was so strong
His wound.

Dialogue was known also to the religious lyric. In the strophic form of the *stabat mater* was composed an affecting dialogue between the crucified Jesus and his mother,[1] that nearly resembles the *estrif*. The *Debate of the Body and the Soul*, a theme frequent in English poetry after the beginning of the thirteenth century, properly belongs to this class of writings. The monologue of the soul to the corpse was common to the Old English time, as well as to the transition period; it gave way to more dramatic dialogue through the influence of Middle Latin models.

In the same way the lament of Mary at the foot of the cross is changed into a *Disputatio inter Mariam et crucem*, that was imitated in English verse towards the close of this period, and later.[2]

In popular proverbial writings, new forms deserving of attention had grown up since the middle of the thirteenth century. They bear plain tokens of French influence, although their substance is mainly an ancient heirloom of native origin. But the name of him to whom, in earlier periods, this inheritance was ascribed—the name of Aelfred—had vanished. Its place was taken by the name of Hendyng, in which some, singularly enough, discern a personification of rhyme, but which rather personifies mental adroitness.

In a Middle English collection from the second half of the thirteenth century, each of the proverbs given appears at the close of a six-lined strophe in *ryme couee*, illustrating it; the French collections of proverbs *Les proverbes del vilain* and *Les proverbes au conte de Bretaigne*, are on a similar

(is found), wrote *me fint* (men find, one finds). The English translator has restored the true order, as I had done before him in the German rendering of these stanzas.

[1] Wright, No. 27.

[2] *Legends of the Holy Rood*, ed. R. Morris, p. 131, *et seq.*

plan. In the French texts, each proverb is followed by this refrain: "This said (or "says") the peasant," while in the English, the refrain runs: "Quoth Hendyng." The aphorisms themselves are generally alliterative, sometimes being also rhymed, but they seldom appear as metrical parts or members of the strophe to which they are added.

The following specimens will give an idea of the mental scope and the tone of the collection:

(10) If thou wilt overcome the lust of the flesh, thou must often fight and flee with eye and with heart; by flesh's lust comes shame: though it seems pleasure to the body, it brings smart to the soul. "Well fighteth that well flyeth," quoth Hendyng.

(11) The wise man holds back his words; for he does not begin to play ere he has tempered his pipe. A fool is a fool, and that is seen; for he will speak green words before they are ripe. "A fool's bolt is soon shot," quoth Hendyng.

(12) Tell thou never thy foeman the shame or mischief that thou hast, thy care, nor thy woe; for he will find if he may, both by night and by day, how of one to make two. "Tell thou never thy foe that thy foot acheth," quoth Hendyng.[1]

One of the manuscripts transmitting the collection to us has an introductory strophe as follows:

Men that wish to hear wisdom, they may learn of the wise Hendyng that was Marcolf's son, good thoughts and many manners for the instruction of many vicious ones, for that was ever his custom.

Here the name Hendyng, be its origin what it may, is connected with the name that was, in the Middle Ages, the European representative of popular wisdom, or, more correctly, of popular wit. French literature served also in this field as intermediator. Collections of proverbs in six-lined strophes, of which the first half contains a proverb of Salomon, and the second, the answer of Marcolph (Marcoul, Marcon, etc.), are not rare in French literature. But it is strange that the saga of Salomon and Morolf never really gained foothold in England, although we find its traces in different periods. Despite its close relations with France, and its active commerce with North Germany and the Netherlands, England was then, as now, isolated by the Channel, and thus had a position in many respects exceptional. The spirit of antiquity, more carefully perpetuated there, acted upon the present with a livelier and intenser power; but many a newer germ that developed richly on continental soil,

[1] Wright and Halliwell, *Reliquiae Antiquae*, I., 110, *et seq.*, Mätzner, *Altenglische Sprachproben*, I., 1, 306.

as the court-art and the animal-fable, never really thrived in England.

VIII.

At about the same time as the secular love-poetry (strictly speaking, somewhat earlier), there appeared political lyrical poetry in English literature. The oldest Middle English song of this kind may date from the fifth decade of the thirteenth century. Yet this verse seems at the time of Henry III. still to have been written principally in Latin or Anglo-Norman. Under Edward I. and his successors the use of the vernacular in this poetry spread more and more, and the Anglo-Norman gave way, until towards the middle of the fourteenth century, when Latin and English shared it in common.

The fosterers of the political lyric are to be sought in this period among two classes: the glee-men and the clergy, in the broadest sense.

The English glee-man was little initiated into the mysteries of parties; his audience was a very mixed one, and only in rare cases had he a powerful patron, as did the Norman minstrel, in the higher circles of society. Hence his poetry was in the service of national interests, as they were understood by the people. His proper mission was to celebrate victorious battles, to praise the heroes of the nation and to pursue its enemies with scorn.

Thus the glee-man took sides with the people in the civil wars during the reign of Henry III. A song on the *Battle of Lewes* (1264) heaps bitter derision upon the adherents of the defeated court-party, and above all on the "king of Germany," Richard of Cornwall, King Henry's brother, who was a thorn in the flesh of the people on account of his foreign sovereignty and the manner in which he gained it, his equivocal attitude, his corruptibility, and the voluptuous life of which he was accused. The poem dwells with much relish upon the circumstance that Richard, after the loss of the battle, occupied a mill with a part of his men, and defended it as if it had been a castle. The refrain recurring at the close of each stanza announces, in a harsh play of words, that the glory of the traitor is at an end:

Richard, thah thou be ever trichard,
trichen shalt thou never more.[1]

"Richard, though thou be ever a traitor, thou shalt treason never more."

In the reign of Edward I., a glee-man celebrates with full detail the great victory of the Flemish burghers over French knighthood at Courtrai, or Kortryk (1302). "Listen, Lordings, both young and old, of the Frenchmen that were so proud and bold, how the Flemish men bought and sold them upon a Wednesday. Better it had been for them at home in their land, than to seek Flemings on the sea-strand, wherefore many a French woman wringeth her hands and singeth, welaway!"[2]

The wars with the Scots gave rise to many popular poems of occasion, that have, for the most part, been lost. Peter de Langtoft has handed down in his chronicle a number of short songs in the *versus tripertitus caudatus*, as they were probably first sung in the army, and afterwards by peasants and citizens, especially in the north of England.

A rather long ballad has come to us complete from the time of Edward I. It originated soon after the victory at Kirkencliff (1306), and is mainly occupied with the capture and execution of Sir Simon Fraser, whose head was set up on London Bridge close by that of William Wallace.

These ballads are borne upon an ardent, naïve patriotism that sees the punishing hand of God in the destruction of the enemy, and utilises it as a warning example. Artless in style and composition, they throughout show a combination of lyrical and epic elements, but so varied that now the epic element predominates, as in the *Song on the battle of Kortryk*, and now, as in the *Song on the King of Almaigne*, the epic material is entirely moulded to the lyric aim.

The metrical form of such poems grew from a long line, whose structure recalls both the Old English verse and the Alexandrine. It generally occurred in four-lined single-rhymed strophes, which are often accompanied by a refrain; the strophe more rarely consists of two tiercets, each one trailing after it a shorter line in the manner of the *ryme couee*.

[1] Th. Wright, *Political Songs of England*, p. 69.
[2] *Ibid.*, p, 187.

If the glee-men seldom touched upon higher party-politics, they oftentimes ventured upon the field of social satire. But it is probable that they did not choose too high marks for their shafts. A glee-man's song from the beginning of the fourteenth century denounces, in harsh and bitter language, the behaviour of the servants of the rich and noble, the pages, grooms, and stable-boys, whose love of show, gluttony, and dissolute life are caustically described. "While God was on earth and wandered wide, what was the reason he would not ride? For he would not a groom to go by his side, no wide-mouthed fellow to neigh nor to chide."

But satire was, as a whole, the province of the clergy, the learned. Neither rank nor power shielded men from their attacks; all classes of society had to submit to be pilloried by them. The abuses in state and church, especially the latter, bad measures of government, social evils, moral rottenness in clergy and laity, all served as material for satire. It now became customary to vary in the English language the themes that for a long time had been treated in Latin verse, and, in France and England, in French verse.

Shortly before the middle of the thirteenth century appeared a bitter lament on the corruption and slavery of the church; its tone is dignified, and seems to proceed from a deeply serious sentiment. It is called *Hwon holy chireche is vnder fote*.[1]

Formerly St. Peter was called Simon. Then quoth our Lord to him, "Thou shalt be called stone. I will set my church upon thee." . . . Those that should defend her are now her foes. Of all her former friends she now has none. Therefore is her honour well-nigh all gone.

Then Simon was here, and now is Simony, that hath marred a great part of the clergy. Bid we our Lord Jesus Christ that he save her for the love of his sweet mother, St. Mary.

St. Peter was pope in Rome. There is the head, and ought to be, of Christendom. Clement and Gregory that came after him often had trouble and sorrow. For they held Christ's men with peace and concord, and also the holy church without bondage.

Then she stood full fast, and afterwards for some time. Now they cast at her with marks and with pounds of silver and gold to fell her to the ground. No one now will suffer for her death nor wounds.

St. Thomas suffered death for her all unjustly, the archbishop Stephen fought for her, and St. Edmund full fairly endowed her. To keep her honour they did all their might. Now, holy church is in evil

[1] Morris, *Old English Miscellany*, p. 89.

hands. All war against her that live in the land; bishops and clerks, knights and knaves, kings and earls, have malice toward her. And the pope himself, who should defend her—if he have his gifts of silver and gold, marks and pounds, with right or wrong—he lets them all do their will, who are so very strong.

Woe that in our day she is so under foot. Bid we all Jesus Christ that he send her help, for his sweet mother's love, that is so fair and sweet, and that we may see it in this life. Amen.

Similar complaints occur more frequently in later times, if not always in the dignified manner of this poem, whose author belonged to that southern English school of poetry that could claim the composer of the *Poema morale* as its founder.

The objects of satire grew more manifold in the reign of Edward I. It became the advocate of the poor people, of the peasant class, whose position in the glorious and blessed reign of that great prince was perhaps not less precarious than later under the rule of "Queen Bess." The *Song of the Husbandman*[1] is a lament of the husbandman who, in spite of bad harvests and dearth, must pay the king high taxes for his wars, and who is tormented and drained to his life's blood by foresters, rangers, and bailiffs. They hunt him as the hound does the hare; he sees himself compelled to sell his grain while it is still as green as grass. He must give up all that he has saved during the whole year. Another poem[2] shows how heavily the hand of the great rested upon the small people, how their greed robbed the poor, either by force or by cunning, of the merest necessaries, and how the lowly were unable to procure justice. The harshest truths are said of royal equity by the fable of the lion, who sits in judgment over the wolf, fox, and ass, and makes the innocent do penance for what the guilty have committed.

Lighter themes are touched as well; as, the trouble of the layman who, charged with seducing a woman, must appear before an ecclesiastical court, whose members and whose actions are depicted with unsparing hand;[3] or the ostentation of women and their passion for dress; how they often buy a robe when they possess no smock,[4]—subjects that

[1] Wright, *Political Songs*, p. 149, *et seq.*
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 195, *et seq.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 155, *et seq.*
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

would please the wandering students. Sometimes the poet makes merry over the fruitless disputations of the scholastics, over their *nego, dubito, concedo.*[1]

We have but few products of the muse of satire from the mournful reign of Edward II., but some of them are very attractive. In October of the year 1311, the king had signed a document conceding the fullest rights to Parliament, and especially to the Upper House. But before the close of the year, he had broken his word under the influence of his favourite, Piers de Gaveston, who had returned from banishment. This fact gave rise to a poem that employs different metres for its different portions, and in the introduction, regularly alternates between Anglo-Norman and English verses. In the body of it four sages describe and explain, in brief, striking aphorisms, the condition of the country, according to a very popular saga that was also admitted into the *Gesta Romanorum.*

The first said: I understand, no king may be well in the land, under God Almighty, unless he can himself read how he shall in the land lead every man with right. For might is right, light is night, and fight is flight. Because might is right, the land is lawless; because night is light, the land is loreless; because fight is flight, the land is nameless.[2]

The second sage follows with these apothegms: "Now one is two, weal is woe, friend is foe," and similarly, the third and fourth sages.

Another poem that must have originated about 1316–17, shows satire in a quite advanced stage as regards scope and matter. It is not content with attacks on the vices and abuses of single classes or ranks of men, or with general allusions to the degeneracy of society; it takes up the various classes in turn, and pitilessly lays bare their social blemishes. The land suffers with a thousand evils: war, murder, scarcity, famine, pestilence, — whence comes all this? The poet conceives the cause to lie in the universal sinfulness that calls down God's avenging arm. Truth and right are down, deceit and treachery are almighty. The review is begun with the church at Rome. From thence Truth should proceed, but the palace is forbidden him; he fears to enter it, even if the pope should call him. For all

[1] Wright, *Political Songs*, p. 210.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

the clerks of the pope have conspired for Truth's destruction, and if he should meet Simony he would shake Truth's beard. Without gold and silver even the most learned, most holy clerk can accomplish nothing at the Roman court; with gold and silver even the adulterer and wretch can there attain their ends. Covetousness and Simony rule the whole world. The archbishops and bishops should keep strict oversight of the servants of the church, but many of them lead questionable lives themselves, and hence dare not speak. Also, no man can serve two masters; they are servants of the king, and gather gold in heaps, and let the church alone. The arch-deacons are open to bribery and let the parson have a wife, and the curate another at will. If an old priest dies, the young clerk hurries to make presents to the patron and bishop: who offers most shall have the church. When the young priest is installed, his first work is to amass money. Then he rides with hawks and hounds, keeps a concubine, wears fine clothes, and lives high. If the bishop hears of this, a little silver is sufficient to stop his mouth. The parson has a curate, a good confessor, who leads a clean life. Another, who can hardly read the mass, does the work somewhat more cheaply; he receives the place. The outlook is no better in the monasteries; pride and envy reign in all orders; the abbots and priors counterfeit the knights and ride a-hunting; the poor man knocks in vain at the abbey, but the knave, sent by a powerful lord who might do the abbot harm, is admitted at once, and served with the best. "Look how they love God who thus serve his own." The monks suffer heavily for love of God: they wear socks in their shoes and felt-boots over them; they are well nourished with flesh and fish, and when the roast is good they leave little in the dish; so kill they their bodies to keep Christ's commandment. After meals they have a pain that hurts them sore; then they are wont to drink in one draught a quart or more of good, strong beer, and afterwards they go to their rest. Thus they chastise their bodies by night and day. The new orders, the mendicant monks, are not spared. Minorites, Jacobites,[1] Carmelites, and Augustins; they, too, do all for money. They like to visit the rich man in sickness, and let the poor one lie. If the rich man dies, the

[1] Dominicans.

brethren fight for his corpse. "It is not only for the calf that the cow lows, but it is for the green grass that grows on the meadow so good." Next comes the turn of the knightly orders, the Hospitallers, who are reminded of the fate of the Templars: "Property comes and goes like clouds in March." The chapters and consistories are then taken up. It is easy to attain an end with them by bribing judges and witnesses. Thereupon appears the physician who helps men to die. The poet graphically tells how the physician, with important professional manner, alternately raises hope and fear in the bosom of the sick man's wife, how, at great expense, he has meats and drinks procured, which he himself consumes, while he makes the patient swallow vile nostrums that only aggravate his condition, and how, after he has enjoyed the night in the house of the patient, he calls out triumphantly the next morning, "Blessed be God, dame, the master is saved!" and leaves the house laden with silver. After the clergy, which, in a measure, includes the physician, the satirist turns his attention to the laity. Counts, barons, and knights are brought before us, who oppress the church instead of defending it, stir up strife at home instead of going to the Holy Land, who behave in the hall like lions, and like hares in the field. The knights dress fantastically, as if they were glee-men; unripe boys are now taken into their ranks; swearing and cursing are counted manly, and the squires imitate their knights in all this. But we must be brief, and refer the reader to the poet himself, who tells how the royal justices, ministers, sheriffs, judges, bailiffs, and beadles, how advocates, assize-justices, how bakers, brewers, merchants, conduct themselves. Wrong and cheating are everywhere; in every walk of life the poor and honest are oppressed and plundered. The satirist portrays all this, not without repetition in details, but still with graphic force and at times with biting wit. His entire work bespeaks a pious, upright spirit, roused by righteous indignation, so that here the words *Facit indignatio versum* apply in the fullest sense. We close with one more passage from his poem:

The pope greets well all unlearned men, William, Richard, and John, and gives them to understand that there is no more Truth; and says that he who, without any process of law, drove Truth out of the land, deserves to be hanged and drawn. Alas, as long as Truth was in the land, he was certainly a good friend.

A greater diversity of metre appears in this clerical satire, as compared with the patriotic ballad. Shorter lines become, beside the long line, an element of the strophe; and together with the coupling-rhyme (*ryme plate*), alternating rhyme plays an important part. The poets of the west showed also in these writings their fondness for alliteration, which in the south and east was generally used casually, in certain formulas and phrases.

A species of the Provençal art-poesy, the dirge (*planh*), already imitated by North French poets at the time of Henry II., is represented in the English lyric of this period by only one poem. An Anglo-Norman minstrel wrote such a song upon the *Death of Edward I.*, "the flower of chivalry" (1307), that was afterwards fairly translated into his own language by an Englishman, presumably a cleric. Still earlier, perhaps as early as the reign of Henry III., the *descort*[1] had been similarly imitated in English, in the *Prisoner's Prayer* (or lament of a captive knight, probably a victim of the civil wars). This writing, by a remarkable chance, was inserted at the end of the *Liber de Antiquis Legibus* preserved in the Guildhall of the city of London. True court-art, in the mediæval sense, never came to more than a few attempts in England.

In passing, we must remember a poet of the time of Edward (the second, or perhaps the first?), who deserves attention less as a poet than as a man, less from the æsthetic standing-point than from the pathological. This is Adam Davy, "marchal"[2] of Stratford-at-Bow, near London, who perhaps had wide celebrity in the neighbourhood of the capital. Adam was a visionary, and what he saw in visions he wrote down by higher inspiration for the king, using short couplets, in part of questionable construction. His *Visions* concerned King Edward, whom he sees in his dream in various situations and surroundings, but who is everywhere a chosen vessel of divine mercy, the predestined emperor of Christendom. Despite the sometimes halting verse, the style is not bad; and the brevity of the poem is a great advantage.

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[1] A *descort* is a poem in strophes of varying rhythm and unequal number of lines. The Provençal poets were fond of using this form to express an unsatisfied, discordant mood.

[2] What this much-meaning word exactly signifies here, I cannot say.

During the first half of the reign of Edward III., the English political lyric found a gifted representative in the Northumbrian, Laurence Minot. Minot seems to have been only a glee-man, though one about to become a minstrel; that is, to find permanent employment in the household of some nobleman. Political ballad-poetry perhaps reached its highest point in the patriotic songs of Minot.

These songs were composed between 1333 and 1352, and they celebrate King Edward's wars: the victory of Halidon Hill, the expedition to Brabant, the first invasion of France, the sea-fight at Sluys, the siege of Tournay, the battle of Crécy, the siege of Calais, the victory won over David Bruce by the archbishop of York at Neville's Cross, the defeat of the Spanish fleet in 1350, and the capture of the Castle of Guisnes in 1352. The poems were evidently written, for the most part, under the immediate impression of the events. When enthusiasm lasted long, the poet would perhaps, after a time, add a second song to the one first written. The song celebrating the day at Halidon Hill is followed by another that reminds the Scots of their victory at Bannockburn (1314, reign of Edward II.), now so brilliantly avenged by King Edward III. Sometimes a new poem was combined with an earlier one; thus the song on the first invasion of France was connected with the account of Edward's expedition to Brabant by a few introductory verses. Minot afterward collocated all the poems in their chronological sequence. The copy we have seems to have been made in the days of Henry V., when Azincourt revived the memory of Crécy.

Minot yields nothing to his predecessors among the gleemen in glowing patriotism, in pride in England's greatness, and in the heroism of her sons, or in love and reverence for his king. He, too, gives these sentiments a very marked religious colouring. And most inconsistently, he feels, like his predecessors, only hatred and contempt for the nation's enemies, an inconsistency that is but too common. He heaps bitter scorn, often vented in coarse nicknames, upon the French, their king, their leaders, and still more, upon the Scots. But he stands out clearly from the more ancient ballad-writers, in the subjective side of his poetry. We see Laurence Minot personally anxious for the welfare of England, personally praying for country and king; and

the proud exultation over victories won that breaks forth in his songs, sounds from lips that speak in the name of the whole nation, but none the less in the name of this definite personality.

The style and metrical form of Minot's songs are also individual, however they may conform to tradition, and regardless of the fact that all the elements into which exact analysis resolves them, were found already existing by the poet. His originality consists in the blending of the *technique* of the glee-men's song with that of the clerical lyric.

The art-tradition, from which his style evidently came, appears to have arisen in the western counties of England. It may have been transplanted by way of Lancashire into Northumbria proper, east of the Peak mountains; its traces are there early evident in the religious lyric.

Minot everywhere combines end-rhyme with alliteration. He does not always use the latter with the same vigour and power,—not in short lines as in long; but, on the whole, he employs it consistently, though not holding to the strict Old English rules.

This fundamental principle was brought to bear in a great diversity of forms. Minot bequeathed to us eleven poems, or more correctly ten; for the two songs on Crécy and Calais together make a single poem. Five of them are written in a glee-man's stanza, which is sometimes varied. The remaining five have each a special form as follows: a b a b a b a b, in lines of four and of three accents;[1] a b a b b c b c, in verses of four accents; a six-lined strophe in *ryme couee;* and finally the short couplet. A glance shows all these to be well-known forms.

The metre exerts an unmistakable influence upon the tone and style of each song. Yet all these poems have a vein in common. Amplification of expression, a diction now popular, now possessing archaic elegance, always animated, though neither graphic nor lucid, are its chief characteristics. These are variously due to the alliteration; but there are other causes.

Minot was fond of increasing the technical difficulties of his task. He was wont, in almost all his strophic poems, to

[1] The verse has three accents in the poem on the siege of Tournay. Its last strophes were extended so as to resemble the strophe of *Sir Tristrem.*

unite the end of a stanza more closely with the beginning of a refrain, or of a following stanza, by the repetition of a word or idea. This was unknown neither to the Provençal art-poesy, nor to the lyric of western England. In this way many starting-points for the development of the thought are determined by chance; now the poet seems to retrograde, and now to take a by-path. Nevertheless, he advances, and when he reaches the end of the poem he has virtually said what he wished to say. But he has not, after all, given a vivid picture of the event that he sings. We obtain the parts of such a picture singly, like fragments that the waves of lyrical movement have borne to the shore. For with Minot the lyrical element is decidedly uppermost; it is unfortunately not powerful enough in itself to enchain our interest.

Thus the impression we receive is very positive, but by no means unmixed; the impression made by a gifted man, who, half folk-poet and half art-poet, is neither entirely, and hence must rank beneath many less important writers.

We here close the third book, although the material that invites our consideration in the period just treated is by no means exhausted. During the century that we have traversed, the more ancient forms of the English drama were developing. In no province of writing, however, would it be less advisable to sacrifice the advantages of a continuous account for the sake of chronology, than in this. We therefore reserve the discussion on the beginnings of the drama for an epoch when more copious material shall allow us more fully to present its significance in the intellectual life of Old England.

BOOK IV.

PRELUDE TO THE REFORMATION AND THE RENAISSANCE.

Per correr migliori acque alza le vele
Omai la navicella del mio ingegno.
DANTE.

I.

At the middle of the fourteenth century, the Anglo-Norman speech had not yet died out in England, but it only prolonged a partly artificial and partly starved vitality. French was spoken and written at the court of him who first bore the title of King of France and England, and in many circles of the nobility; in somewhat the same way as it was written by Frederick the Great of Prussia. But it was the brilliant victories of the third Edward over France—victories, it is true, whose splendour had no correspondingly permanent results—that imparted to the English national feeling a lofty enthusiasm that may be compared to the awakening of German self-consciousness under Frederick the Great. A knowledge of the foreign language was with difficulty preserved in the remoter circles of the population, by the influence of legislation, and still more by the judiciary and the school. In the two last-named departments, however, a change of practice soon became necessary. French as the medium of instruction in the Latin schools was displaced by English, under Edward III.; and as early as the ninth year of Richard II.'s reign (1386), the honest Trevisa complains that the "children of grammar schools" knew no more French than their left heel. In the judiciary the language of the conquerors was forced to yield to English as early as 1362, because it was "too little known." Parliament was also, in the same year, opened for the first time in the English language. But the proceedings of this parliament were still carried on in French, and this practice held its own, with slight exceptions, until the reign of Henry VI. The statutes continued to be published in the same language down to a later period.

It is certain that in the second half of the fourteenth century England was no longer a truly bi-lingual country. The

Anglo-Norman, at that time, was as a yellowed leaf on a luxuriantly budding bough.

The English tongue had not yet begun to conquer its cosmopolitan position; but it was approaching the form in which it was to become a universal language. In most of the dialects, and not one of them had yet risen to sole preeminence, inflection was already much reduced, in some of them, to the minimum; nearly all had that loose and simple structure which gradually transferred the grammatical centre of gravity into the domain of word arrangement. All, without exception, disclosed the wealth of meaning and delicate shadings characteristic of a mixed vocabulary.

English literature, despite its modest beginning, had also made the most far-reaching conquests in the epochs passed, and had based its future greatness upon rude but solid foundations. The Englishman would fain draw from an ample store. The noise of life, the fulness of reality, do not confuse him, but excite his mental elasticity. He likes to find his way in a labyrinth, to dispose himself at will in lavish surroundings. His art thrives only on the broadest realistic basis; his worldly wisdom is the sum of a prolonged series of single observations; his law rests on precedent; his politics is all tradition.

This realism, tending to the accumulation of things and facts, and rejoicing in the diversity of life, was clearly manifested in the literature of the previous period. English poetry had acquired a wealth of materials for fiction. It showed, as yet, few traces of intellectual mastery, or artistic moulding of them. The English taste itself still lacked development in form. Hence its power of assimilation could reveal itself in but a limited degree. It was manifested in the first place in the choice of matter; one theme was preferred, or another set aside, according to the writer's craving for strong and lasting excitement. It was further manifested in the skill with which concrete detail was adjusted to the costume of native conceptions, or in the boldness with which the popular poet drew the substance from the artistic form that enveloped it, and clothed it in new and ruder garb. It was manifested in the humour that now and then broke forth, in the intimate relationship with the life of nature that we have observed, in the moral earnestness pervading the poems

of didactic writers and satirists, in a certain melancholy inherited by the Englishman from his fathers; finally, in graphic directness and simplicity of expression. All in all, the old Teutonic spirit was still discernible. But this spirit had been severely chastened in the school of life, and if the English nation went forth steeled from the struggle with the forces of history and nature, if it began to conquer wealth, power, freedom, it nevertheless still bore, in consequence of that struggle, traces of mental rudeness which the improvements in the outward things of life made all the more conspicuous. The English mind had evidently forgotten and lost much, and it had not adequately assimilated the new matter which it had been obliged to take up. In a word, it was the mind of a people, separated from its own past by a long period of foreign domination.

It is strange that the new impetus of poetry accompanying the growth of national consciousness under the third Edward should at first move in a direction leading back to that past, and should seem to ignore all the development of the preceding period. We mean the revival of alliterative poetry. The phenomenon may be explained when we searchingly examine its scope and antecedents.

In the reigns of the third Henry and the first two Edwards, rhyme had won universal and undisputed sway in English poetry, and with it the new forms of verse and strophe. Yet it had not been able entirely to crowd out the Old English measure. Not only does alliteration, clinging to certain formulas and phrases, occur in numberless poems; not only do many poets use it consciously, and some with the most consistent regularity, but there is also no lack o strophic forms, whose elements, loosed from their connection and relieved of the end-rhyme, would appear as the legitimate offspring of the Old English long line. We have noticed such forms chiefly in the lyrics of the western counties; we then saw how they spread thence to Northumbria, and were employed by Laurence Minot. It would not, then, perhaps, be too bold to assume that purely alliterative, rhymeless poetry had never entirely disappeared during this period. No such verse, from that time, has as yet come to light, and may never do so; yet it remains possible, nay, probable, that, in some of the more isolated monasteries of the Welsh

Marches, lives of saints were occasionally composed, under the Edwards, in the style of the *Marherete* and *Juliana*, which date from the beginning of the thirteenth century.

If this was the case, the moment must have come when a secular poet of that region became conscious of the advantages of the alliterative long line, as an epic form, over the prevailing metres of the romance-poetry, the short couplet or the *ryme couee*, and saw how much better it was adapted to epic breadth and fulness than the latter, how much more easily than the former it could lend dignity and brilliance to diction. The old long line must also have commended itself to this poet of the west by the ease with which it could be handled. Formulas of alliteration were plentiful in the poetry of his home, in the folk-song as well as in the erotic lyrics of the clerks; nor did this poetry lack models for rhythmical structure. In the imitation of these hypothetical saint-lives, it was only necessary to set aside the rhyme and to carry out the alliteration with somewhat greater strictness.

The current forms of romance-poetry had proved incapable of bringing forth in England an art-style in the higher sense. The ceaseless wavering between different principles of accentuation, and, still more, the want of a fixed, universally recognised norm for the relation between rhythm and number, had prevented that feeling of stability so essential to the formation of the epic style. It is not strange, then, that a newer form was tried, which, though old, was one whose national character was yet felt. It is no wonder that this attempt was made at a time when the native life, as a whole, was beginning powerfully to react against the foreign.

This reaction, it is true, was limited by set bounds. What was really dead could not be revived; what had gone into the blood and marrow of the nation could not be removed. It was possible, however, to bring to light forces, hidden but living, to prolong by assiduous care the life of such as were fast ebbing, and to turn the uncertain into a fixed course.

The sequel will show how this was brought about in poetry.

After the middle of the fourteenth century there arose a series of romances, beginning in the territory of the Welsh Marches, that borrowed the verse of the Old English epos,

and a certain reflection of its stately splendour. This new alliterative poetry shows the ancient fondness for the frequent, nay, extravagant, use of synonymous expressions and the employment of standing epic epithets and formulas, while the diction often surprises by its sensuous freshness and fulness. The language itself is archaic; many ancient words reappear that had left the other dialects and the poetry of the newer forms generally. What a wealth of Teutonic vocables this language reveals, when certain conceptions are to be expressed, as those of man or hero! The antique tone of many verses vividly reminds us of the time when the English language had taken up no Romanic element, as when we read in the description of a battle:

> Schon schene uppon schaft schalkene blode.[1]
> Shone sheeny the warriors' blood on the shaft.

The illusion, however, is brief. For the language of this western alliterative poetry contains, as a whole, many Romanic words, though they are made to conform almost exactly to the Germanic principle of accentuation, while in the current verse-forms of that time, and a couple of centuries later, the accent of such words was unstable. As regards the inflections, or end-syllables, the western dialect had not escaped the inroads of time, and the synthetic poverty of the language is not always compatible with the frequent archaisms in the arrangement of words.

If the language itself thus betokens the union of elements not quite harmonious, the contrast between form and contents is still more marked. For the ideal world into which we are transported by this noble alliterative poetry is by no means an Old Teutonic or Old English one. Manners and sentiments, costume and mounting, essentially belong to cultivated, mediæval society, powerfully influenced by France. The same is true of the subject-matter. It is the atmosphere of the later Middle Ages that we breathe in these romances; many of them are patterned directly from French models.

Verse and diction, however, stamp the imitations with originality. The national vesture of the foreign material does not suggest that the material is borrowed. Even the poet cannot escape the influence of form; the altered style

[1] *Joseph of Arimathie*, v. 510.

brings with it a new spirit. Something old-fashioned and serious, a touch of austerity or of piety, pervade the poems, and sometimes this tone does not fully accord with the themes adopted. This is not all: the peculiar form of presentation also brings with it a certain independence in the adaptation of the original. It appears mostly in details; but the charm of a poem depends very largely upon details.

The archaic cast of the form, combined with the thoroughly modern subject-matter (that is, modern in the fourteenth century), at first has an odd and startling effect. But this impression is soon overcome; one grows accustomed to the novel style, and yields voluntarily to its mysterious spell, a spell that is, nevertheless, broken in protracted works, or in mediocre poets, by monotony.

Two poems, of which fragments alone have reached us, are the most ancient monuments of this new alliterative poetry.

These are: the fragment of a romance on the Holy Graal, or *Joseph of Arimathie*, and two remnants of an *Alexander* romance.

The former poem is founded upon a diffuse work in French prose, which is well condensed by the English poet, in his pithy, if not faultless verse. The solemn and somewhat oracular diction admirably suits this material, with its vagueness and its touch of mysticism. But the real power of the poet appears chiefly in the representation of war and battle.

King Evalac of Sarras has gathered an army, and is advancing against King Tholomer of Babylon, who has made an incursion into his territory, and has already won several successes. Urged by Evalac's wife, her brother Seraph joins him with five hundred men. Then comes the attack on the enemy:

> Now they hie to the plain where the others halt;
> He[1] arrays his rich men, and better he rights them,
> That they rue no attack, ill-wrought through his counsel.
> Then says to them Seraph: "Hold still and be steadfast,
> And bethink ye, good men, of the grief to your children,
> What thereof will befall, if we be confounded.
> On our own land, doughty, it were better to die,
> Than with shame to shun battle and shrink us aback."
> They gained on them then to the length of a glaive,

[1] That is, Seraph.

And when Seraph them saw, the foe might soon see
His pole-axe fall proudly, with prowess downthrust.
Where the press was thickest, he proved his weapon;
He brake apart brains and bruiséd the men,
Bore death in his hand and dealt it about him.
He had on high a great-helved hatchet;
With grasp hard he held it in his two hands;
He struck and crushed them, and proved his strength,
That few might fare from him and go to flight.
There were steeds to destroy and struggles to strive in,
Men mightful to meet, and shields through to mall.
They burst hard hauberks and breasts they thrilled;
Shone the sheen of the warriors' blood on the shaft.
They that halted on horse, they hewed down helmets;
They that held them on foot, they hacked through shoulders.
Lay many swooning for slashing of swords,
And, doomed, in a short while died the death.
There were heads unhoused and helms uplifted;
Hard shields were cloven and shattered in quarters.
They slew man and horse, at a stroke down hurled.[1]

It cannot be said that the single moments forming this account combine in the mind so as to give a clear picture of the whole. The general impression is nevertheless heightened and carried to the climax by the many forcibly drawn single scenes, that are oftentimes repeated. Happily, it is the tumult and whirl of battle that is here to be treated; and the sensation of stormy, eddying commotion to be called up by the picture is excited by the very manner of presentation. Yet we feel how inadequate these devices of style must prove to other tasks. Our poet has the tact not to attempt portrait or landscape painting, or perhaps it was merely good luck that denied him the opportunity. Detailed descriptions of this kind are entirely wanting in the fragment.

It contains, it is true, only seven hundred and nine verses; the beginning, probably numbering upward of a hundred verses, is lost.

The first of the two fragments of the *Alexander* romance tells the things that happened before the hero's birth, and the history of his boyhood, and breaks off in the midst of the siege of Byzantium by Philip. It is based upon various originals, some of them historical and some clearly romantic. The first class is represented by the compilation of Radulph of St. Albans (died 1151) and by the *Universal History* of Orosius; the second, by the *Historia Alexandri de proeliis* of

[1] *Joseph of Arimathie*, ed. Skeat. v. 489, *et seq.*

the Arch-Presbyter Leo. The style agrees with this derivation of the material, sometimes merely summarising in the manner of a chronicle, sometimes falling into the prolixity of the romance. The most brilliant passages of the fragment are in the episode of Nectanabus and Olympias. The poet portrays from head to foot the beauty of the Macedonian queen, but with no better success than has been won by a thousand other poets who have foolishly attempted to rival painting. Very graphic, on the other hand, is the description of the death of Nectanabus at the hand of Alexander. The second fragment, which language, style, and verse refer to the same pen, treats of Alexander's expedition into the land of the Oxydraches, which is followed by his correspondence with Dindimus, king of the Brachmanes, of whose identity with the Oxydraches the author does not seem to have been aware. The diction of these fragments is forcible and expressive; the poet constructs his verse with a stricter observance of the ancient rules of alliteration than most of those who essayed the same form at that time. What we have of his work causes us to regret the loss of so much of it.

The example given by the author of the *Alexander* was not without result. Another poet, named William, was plainly influenced by him, at least as regards metre and style. In 1355 he translated the French romance of *Guillaume de Palerne* into English verse, at the commission of the Earl of Hereford, Humphrey de Bohun. The original was a *roman d'aventures* in short couplets, written towards the end of the twelfth century for the Countess Yolande,[1] daughter of Baldwin IV. of Flanders, and it purported to be a translation from the Latin. The fable may have originated among the Normans in Sicily, or southern Italy, and it contained many a topic tempting to the taste of the Middle Ages. A Spanish prince who is transformed into a were-wolf by the sorcery of his wicked stepmother; a Sicilian prince (William, the hero of the story), whose life is sought by his uncle, and whom the good were-wolf carries away from his unsuspecting parents, and brings to the vicinity of Rome; a Roman emperor, who discovers the youth that has been found and brought up by a cowherd, brings him to his court, and assigns

[1] At first Countess of Soissons, after 1177, of St. Paul.

him to his daughter Melior as a page; a tender love-intrigue between William and Melior, that in many details recalls the sentimentality of Greek romances; add to this knightly combats, pursuit, and the "hair-breadth scapes" of the lovers fleeing from Rome, first enveloped in bear-skins and then in deer-skins, and finally the happy meeting of all concerned at Palermo, disenchantment, recognition, reconciliation, and various weddings;—all this, with some lapses into monotony, but in the main, attractively and skilfully, had been told by the French poet.

William, the English imitator, impresses one as a modest, naïvely good humoured, and by no means untalented personage. While he in general closely conforms to the original, he takes liberties with details, and hesitates neither to abridge nor to add much new matter. Although he obliterates a few of the beauties of his model, all in all, he excels the French poet. Happy in the delineation of combat and of love, his main strength lies in the painting of tender or unaffectedly touching scenes, and many a trait thus added bears witness to a refined sense and keen observation. He shows great skill in managing the alliterative verse, which the precedent of the *Alexander* poet probably led him to adopt; and his apology to the reader for the choice of this metre is quite unnecessary; he tells us that he lacked confidence to write in short couplets:

> In this manner William has finished his work, just as it was required by the French, and as far as his wit reached, that was indeed weak. But if everybody is not pleased with the metre, let not the poet have reproach; he would willingly have done better if his wit had in any way been sufficient.[1]

We are especially attracted in *William of Palerne* by the author's mind, which is reflected in the whole work, and is plainly shown in single passages. Rather naïve in his judgment of the relations between William and Melior, that, from a strictly moral standing-point are somewhat questionable, the poet is, at the same time, a man of piety and goodness of heart, capable of appreciating the nobler impulses of human nature, and fond of presenting them; an admirer of virtue and strength in all relations of life, and an advocate of the poor and the weak.

1 *Willian of Palerme*, v. 5521, *et. seq.*

II.

At first, the verse combining alliteration and rhyme seems to have been more fully developed and adapted to a wider range of subjects in the northwestern counties, and chiefly in Lancashire. It occurs earliest in romances having to do with Gawayne; this was a favourite theme of poetry at the north, as was the Arthurian saga in general. Cumberland, Westmoreland, the districts between the Tyne and Tweed, and all the south of the Scotland of to-day, are rich in names of places that point to a localising and a more or less independent growth of the Arthurian traditions in that region. This phenomenon is easily accounted for by the long duration of British rule in Strath-Clyde, and the intercourse kept up by these Britons with their own race, on the one side, in Wales, and with the Gaels of Caledonia, on the other.

The short and attractive poem, *The Anturs of Arther at the Tarnewathelan* (the Adventures of Arthur at Tarn Wadling) is a clear case of the separate growth of known saga-material. There is reason to believe that it was written in Lancashire, perhaps about, or some time before the middle of the fourteenth century.[1] A most simple plot, giving opportunity for strong typical scenes, is worked out in somewhat obscure, but picturesque language. The ethical purpose of the author lies in the exhortation to moderation and discretion; but one suspects a more directly practical purpose, and is tempted to ask whom the poet meant to represent by Gawayne, the central subject of the whole. Barring some amplification, the style recalls that of the ballad. The metrical form is a strophe in which nine alliterative, but rhymed long lines are followed by four short lines, the rhyme-sequence being a b a b a b a b c d d d c. Like Laurence Minot, the author is fond of connecting the close of one strophe with the beginning of the next by words of identical or similar sound.

Another writer, also nameless, appears in the sixties or seventies of the century, not very long after the poet of Arthur's adventures. This writer has stamped himself upon several works, so that we are able to portray him with some exactness. This is worth while because his was a personality of moment.

[1] But in no case long before 1350, and still less before 1300, as has been claimed.

It is hard to determine his rank in life. After being educated at the cloister-school, he probably entered the house of some nobleman, where he was occupied as scribe or reader, or perhaps as director of the minstrels. Although versed in Latin and French, and tolerably well-read both in the Bible and profane literature, he was also at home in the mysteries of the hunt and in other knightly exercises. He knew well how a knight was armed, and what occurred in courtly circles at festivals, at the reception of strangers, *et cetera;* for he had often seen them. He evidently took pleasure in this merry, brilliant life.

But he was especially attracted by nature. His musing disposition found charm in watching her in the different phases of the year, and he seems acquainted by personal observation with a great part of western England, traversed perhaps in company with his lord, or at his behest. Nor did he know the ocean from a merely fleeting view; he describes it in storm and calm as finely as he does the thickly-leaved forest or the rugged mountain landscape.

As an epic poet, for such he was, he chose his materials and shaped them with the strictest regard to the moral ideas he wished to present. These ideas did not merely attract him unconsciously to the materials, and determine the manner of forming them; they were the real incentives that moved him to write. If he did not become a didactic poet or allegorist, like a hundred of his contemporaries, it is because his intuition saw a deep symbolism in life and nature.

Only one secular poem from his pen is preserved, *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight.* He largely borrowed his subject-matter from the *Perceval* (or *Conte del Graal*) of Crestien de Troyes, but in such a way that what is merely episodical in the source becomes the centre of his work, is put into new relations, and entirely remoulded. Few mediæval romance-poets can so justly lay claim to originality as he.[1]

The plot is extremely simple. King Arthur, surrounded by the knights of the Round Table, solemnises the Yule festival at Camelot, in Somersetshire. The festal jubilee lasts fifteen days. New Year's day is kept in chapel and hall,

[1] This is not incompatible with the fact that his poem has many points in common with other Arthurian romances.

gifts are asked and bestowed, merry jests enliven the talk of gain and loss. The guests seat themselves at the table, each in his place. Upon the dais sit the king and Guenever, most beautiful of women, in splendid attire; at one side is Gawayne, at the other Agravayn *(Agrauayn a la dure mayn);* Bishop Bawdewyn has the place of honour, and beside him sits Ywayn. The king is not yet disposed to eat. Hot of blood and eager for action as he is, he is wont, on such a day, to decline food until he either hears an adventure related, or experiences one. This time he need not wait long. Hardly has the first course been served amid the sound of trumpets, when a knight, in green garments and of gigantic figure, with flowing hair and long, bushy beard, rides, mounted on a green horse, into the hall. He wears neither helmet nor coat-of-mail, he carries neither spear nor shield. In one hand he holds a holly-bough, in the other a huge axe with a sharp edge. The poet dwells rather long on the description of this knight, his figure and his dress. But if he here falls into a common error of romantic poets, he proves in the sequel that he understands the kind of word-painting alone suitable to poetry, that which presents objects in progressive movement. Without salutation the knight rides to the high dais, and inquires for the governor of the company. Great astonishment seizes all present; all sit silent and motionless, either from fear or from courtesy. The king speaks, and bids the strange knight welcome. But he has not come to tarry, even if his purpose is peaceful. He seeks the most valiant hero to test his stanchness by a jest. Who has the courage may give him a stroke with his battle-axe, he will peacefully endure it, and in twelve months and a day, he will take his turn. The hall, at these words, becomes yet stiller than before. The knight rises on his horse in his saddle, fiercely rolls his red eyes, wrinkles his bristly brows, and waves his beard in expectation of him who shall arise. No one responds. Thereupon the hero speaks: "What! Is this Arthur's house of which the boast runs through so many kingdoms? Where are now your pride of victory, your fierceness, your anger, and your boasting words? Now is the revel and the renown of the Round Table overcome by one man's speech; for all tremble with dread before the fight has begun." And he laughs

so loud that the blood rushes to the king's face; he leaps up angrily and advances toward the knight: "Thine asking is foolish, and as thou seekest foolishness, thou shalt find it. I know no man that fears thy great words. In God's name give me thine axe, and I will fulfil thy wish." He seizes the axe, and the Green Knight alights from his horse, and calmly prepares to receive the blow.

Then Gawayne bends low before the king, and respectfully begs permission to leave the table and accept the knight's challenge: "For methinks it not seemly for thee to take it upon thyself, while many so bold sit about thee upon the bench. I am the weakest of all, and of wit the feeblest; in my life the least would be lost. I am noble only as thy nephew, because thy blood flows in my veins. And because this work is too strange for thee, and I have first begged thee for it, so trust it to me." Arthur grants his prayer, and commands him to rise from the bench. Kneeling, the hero receives the weapon from the king's hand, with best wishes for success, and advances upon the Green Knight. The latter first demands the name of his opponent. Gawayne tells his name and promises that in a year and a day he will seek the Green Knight to receive the answering blow, wherever in the world he may be. Then the strange knight bares his neck; Gawayne lifts the axe and cuts off his head with a sturdy stroke. The head rolls through the hall; many spurn it with the foot, and the blood leaps up in thick streams from the trunk. But the Green Knight does not falter; he seizes his head with his hand, and seats himself in the saddle again. Then the head lifts its eyelids, opens its mouth, and speaks: "Look to it, Gawayne, that, according to thy promise, thou equip thyself and loyally seek me until thou hast found me. Take thou the way to the Green Chapel. I charge thee to fetch such a stroke as thou gavest. Thou dost deserve a prompt requital on New Year's morn. I am known to many as the Knight of the Green Chapel; if thou seekest me thou wilt never fail. Therefore come, or be called recreant." With a violent jerk he turns the reins and, his head in his hand, chases out of the hall-door, so that the fire springs on the flint under the hoofs of his horse. Arthur and Gawayne look laughingly after him; the king soothes the queen and causes the axe to be hung over the

table as a memento. The king now has an appetite; they seat themselves at table, Gawayne is served a double portion of all dainties, and riot and revel, with the play of minstrels, prevail until the day ends. This closes the first part of the poem.

The opening of the second canto may be rendered thus:

This adventure amazing made Arthur's first marvel,
When in youth he eagerly yearned to hear.
If their words were wanting when they went to feast,
Now their hearts they full hold of hard hero-work.
Gawayne gladly began that game in the hall.
End it heavy and earnest, no wonder it is.
For though men at the meal make merry and drink,
A year quickly runs, never rests nor returns,
With the close the beginning keeps seldom accord.
Thus this Yule-tide passed over, and after, the year,
In its several seasons swiftly swept by.
After Christmas-joy cometh the Lenten-time crabbed,
When flesh yields to fish and more simple food.
But the weather of the world with winter doth struggle;
The cold is less keen, and clouds uplift.
Spring rain down-sheddeth in warm, sweet showers,
On the fair valley falls; and flowers there show,
And the garment is green of the grounds and the groves.
Birds make ready to build and burning songs trill,
For soft summer's solace that speedeth now soon
In delight;
And blossoms swell to blow,
In flushing rows and bright;
And noble notes enow,
Ring from the wooded height.
After the season of summer with soft-blowing winds,
When zephyr sighs sweetly on seeds and herbs,
Most winsome is the wort that then groweth wild,
When the damp drops drip from the dewy leaves,
A blissful blush to bide of the bright-beaming sun.
But then the harvest hastens to hurry it on,
Warns it before the winter to wax aripe.
With drought he drives the dust to drift about,
Before the face of the fold to fly full high.
The wroth wind of the welkin wrestles with the sun,
The leaves launch from the limbs and lie alow.
And fadeth gray the grass that erst was green;
Rotteth and ripeneth all that once uprose so fresh.
Thus the young year grows old in many yesterdays,
And winter windeth round again, and Time no leave
Will ask.
Until the Michaelmas moon
Sure winter doth unmask,
Then thinks Gawayne full soon
Of his journey's anxious task.

He nevertheless celebrates All-Hallow's day at the court of Arthur, who prepares a great banquet in his honour. All try to be cheerful, though they are filled with anxiety for the hero. After the meal Gawayne begs his uncle for leave of absence; he wishes to begin his journey the next morning. The morning dawns. Gawayne dresses himself, and is armed with much ceremony. He hears mass in his gold-gleaming armour, and then takes leave of Arthur and his court. His steed, Gringolet, whose harness also gleams like the sun, is led up. The hero puts on the richly-decked helmet, and receives the shield that bears a golden "pentangle" on a red field, and on the other half, an image of the Holy Virgin. The poet exhaustively discusses the meaning of these symbols; the hero has been faultless in his five senses, his five fingers have never failed him, he puts his trust in the five wounds of Christ, he draws his strength from the five joys of the Virgin mother, he practices five virtues unceasingly: frankness, fidelity, purity, courtesy, and pity. Gawayne seizes his lance, says a last farewell, he thinks forever, and sets spurs to his horse. Those left behind with tears lament the hero dashing hence.

Gawayne rides toward the north, through desolate stretches, with no other companion than his horse. He reaches North Wales and follows the coast; at Holyhead he passes over the fords until he comes to the wilderness of Wirral. He everywhere inquires for the Green Knight, but can gain no tidings of him. His journey is full of difficulty and danger, of privation and anxiety. He is opposed by rocks and rivers; serpents, wolves, bulls, bears, and wild boars attack him, also satyrs and giants. Worse than everything else is the cold winter, with ice and snow and sleet, that often almost slay him when he has lain down in his armour to sleep at the foot of naked rocks. On Christmas eve he finds himself in a dense, savage mountain forest. He beseeches Christ and the Virgin to grant him means of hearing mass and matins on Christmas morn. He has hardly crossed himself thrice in prayer, before he sees upon a height a beautiful, well-fortified castle, surrounded by a large park. Gawayne rides toward the chief gate, but a double moat winds around the wall, and the drawbridge is up. Upon the call of the knight, a porter appears on the wall, who

gives friendly answer to his request for entrance, disappears, and soon returns with other servants. The drawbridge falls, the gate is opened wide, and Gawayne rides into the castle, where he is received with great honours. His horse is led into the stable, knights and squires hasten to accompany the guest into the hall, and to relieve him of his weapons. Then the lord of the castle appears, a huge and strong hero, of high old age, with broad beard. He cordially welcomes Gawayne, and leads him into a chamber, where he assigns him a page as servant. After Gawayne has laid off his armour, and put on a gorgeous robe that has been brought him, he returns to the hall, where a chair has been placed for him near the chimney, and a richly embroidered mantle is thrown over him. Now a table is made ready, and the hero is most bountifully feasted. He makes himself known to his host over the wine, and there is great rejoicing in the hall that Gawayne, "the father of nurture," is there. After the dinner, they betake themselves to the chapel for evening worship, which is also attended by the lady of the castle. When service is over, the lady leaves her seat and, led by an ancient dame, approaches the knightly guest. She herself is young, and radiant with luxuriant beauty. By permission of the lord, Gawayne goes to meet them, salutes the old dame with a low bow, and kisses the young woman. The evening is passed in cheerful conversation over the wine until all retire.

The Christmas festival is celebrated with much joy at the castle, in which are many guests. At table Gawayne sits beside his beautiful hostess, and they entertain each other most agreeably. The revels last for three days. On the evening of St. John's day, many guests who wish to depart early the next morning take leave. Gawayne also bids his host farewell; but the lord of the castle seeks to detain him longer. Informed of the aim of the knight's journey, he promises to take care that he shall reach it in time; the Green Chapel being only two miles distant from the castle, Gawayne will be there early enough if he departs on New Year's morn. Relieved of this care, Gawayne gladly yields to the friendly urging of his host. The lords enjoy themselves in merry conversation with the ladies until deep into the night. The lord of the castle proposes to his guest that

Gawayne shall keep his hostess company while he himself rides, on the morrow, to the hunt. Upon his return each shall present to the other what the day has brought him. Gawayne cheerfully enters into the jest, and they laughingly seal the bargain with a draught. At last all part and go to rest.

The third canto describes the carrying out of this compact, which is twice renewed. It thus presents the history of three days. Each day the knight early rides to the hunt, which the poet picturesquely describes with true national delight, and in minutest detail. The game sought on the first day of the hunt is deer and hinds; on the second day, wild boars; and the third day concerns a fox-hunt. Each time the poet interrupts the description of the hunt by the account of Gawayne's experiences. Our hero is every morning surprised in bed by a visit from his beautiful hostess. The lady has clearly conceived a deep attachment for the knight, and brings him into a position highly dangerous to his virtue. Gawayne, however, remains steadfast against the repeated temptation. He rejects the lady's advances respectfully and courteously, but with decision. He is glad to take her kisses, however, and faithfully gives them back to the returning lord of the castle, in exchange for the abundant booty of the hunt. But our knight is not in all respects true to his word. At his last meeting with her, after he has declined a gold ring, he accepts a green girdle from the lady, because she says that this girdle will preserve the wearer from death and wounds; and at her request, he promises to keep this gift secret from all the world. Thus the hero, who has victoriously withstood sensual temptation, ignominiously succumbs to the fear of death.

The fourth and last canto brings the hero to the goal of his journey. New Year's morning draws on with snow and storm. Gawayne lies sleepless, with closed eyes, in bed, and hears every crowing of the cock. He springs from bed before daylight, dresses himself, and buckles on his armour by the light of a lamp, not forgetting to gird himself with the lady's gift. Then he steps into the castle-court, and thanks the servants for their good offices. Gringolet is led forth, and his master recognises, in his appearance, the care he has received. With words of gratitude and blessing for the

inmates of the castle, Gawayne mounts his horse, takes his shield, and rides forth. He is accompanied by a servant to carry his lance, and to point out the way. They go through a rocky, cold, foggy, winter landscape. Having reached a high, snow-clad hill, they halt at the attendant's request. They are no longer far from the goal, and now, at the last hour, the servant seeks to dissuade Gawayne from his purpose. He describes the tremendous height and strength of the Green Knight, who has no mercy, but kills every one that passes the Green Chapel, be he churl, monk, or priest. "Therefore, noble Sir Gawayne, let this man alone, and go, for God's sake, some other way. I will hie me home, and I shall swear by God and all his saints to keep the secret. Never will I say that thou didst flee before any man." "Many thanks," says Gawayne, and adds with displeasure: "Hail to the man who wishes my good! I believe well thou wouldst faithfully keep my secret. But should I fly because of fear, as thou tellest me, I should be a coward knight; I should not be excused. But I will go to the chapel for chance that may fall, and speak with that knight, come weal or woe, as fate may have it. Though he is a stern man, God is well able to save his servants." "Mary!" says the other, "if thou wilt lose thy life, I will not let nor keep thee. Have here thy helmet on thy head, thy spear in thy hand, and ride me down this path by yon rocky side, until thou be brought to the bottom of the rugged valley. Look then to the clearing at thy left, and thou shalt see the chapel and the burly hero that guards it. Now fare thee well in God's name, Gawayne the noble; for all the gold in the world, I would not go with thee." With these words the man turns his horse, puts spur to him, and gallops away. Gawayne is alone. "By God's self," he says, "I will neither weep nor groan; I am full ready for God's will, and have committed myself to him." He pursues his way, and soon reaches the valley. He in vain looks around for the chapel; only high walls of rock and gnarled trunks confront him. At last he sees a smooth hill on the bank of a stream, that bubbles like boiling water. Gawayne dismounts, ties his steed to a linden bough, and examines the hill. It is covered with turf, and has three entrances; the inside is all hollow. "Can this be the Green Chapel?" says the knight; "the devil

might say mass here at midnight." He begins to fear that he has allowed himself to be ensnared by the fiend. After he has climbed the hill, he hears a loud noise from the opposite bank, like the grinding of a scythe on a grind-stone. Gawayne thinks that the sound proceeds from his enemy, who is preparing for the encounter. He lifts up his voice, and calls: "Who dwells in this place to hold discourse with me? Now goes here the good Gawayne, if any man will hurry hither to have his wish, now or never." "Abide!" is the answering call from the height of the opposite shore, "and thou shalt speedily have what I once promised thee." Once more resounds the dismal noise, and then springs forth from a rocky cave the Green Knight, dreadful to behold, a new Danish axe in his hand. Leaning on his axe, he jumps over the river, and approaches Gawayne. "Welcome to this place, Gawayne; like a true man, thou hast timed thy travel. Thou knowest the covenant between us; we are alone here. Take off thy helmet from thy head, and have thy pay. Make no more debate than I did when thou didst strike off my head with one blow." Gawayne declares himself ready, bends his head, and presents his bared neck. The Green Knight seizes his grim weapon, and raises it for the blow. As the axe falls, Gawayne shrinks with his shoulders. His opponent holds, and reproaches him with his cowardice; he himself had not flinched in a like position. "I flinched once," says Gawayne, "but will no more. If my head falls on the stones, I cannot restore it." The Green Knight raises the axe again. This time Gawayne does not move. "Now that thou hast thy heart whole, I must hit thee; look to thy neck, if so be it recover from my stroke!" Gawayne says angrily, "Why, thrash on, thou proud man, thou dost threaten too long; I believe thine own heart fails thee." "Forsooth," answers the other hero, "thou speakest so bold that I will hinder thy fate no longer." Wrinkling lips and brows, he reaches out for the third time, and lets the axe fall upon Gawayne's neck; but he only slightly wounds him. The blood flows over the hero's shoulders to the earth. When he sees his own blood on the snow, Gawayne springs aside, arms himself with helmet and shield, draws his sword, and speaks—never since his mother bore him, had he been half so glad,—"Hold now with thy blow, offer me no more,

one stroke I have taken in this place without strife; if thou givest me any more, I will readily requite it. For according to our covenant, but one falls to me."

The Green Knight stands quietly resting on his axe, and looks with pleasure at the undismayed hero. Then he speaks with a loud voice: "Bold knight, be not so angry; no one has done thee unmannerly wrong here. We acted only according to our agreement. I promised thee one stroke, thou hast it, hold thee well paid. I release thee from the rest. If I had been more wrathful, I could have dealt thee worse harm. At first I menaced thee with one stroke, without striking thee, on account of the agreement we made the first night; thou didst keep it faithfully, and gavest me all thy gain. The second feint was for the second day: thou didst kiss my wife, and gavest me the kisses again. But the third time thou failedst, and therefore hadst thou that tap. For mine it is, that woven girdle which thou wearest, my own wife wove it, I know it well. I know well thy kisses and thy virtues and the wooing of my wife; I wrought it myself; I sent her to tempt thee, methinks, the most faultless hero, in sooth, that ever trod the earth. As pearls are of more price than white peas, so is Gawayne of more price than other gay knights. But here thou hast sinned a little; a little thou brokest faith. But that was not for amorous wooing; it was because thou lovedst thy life, hence I blame thee the less."

Full of shame and remorse, Gawayne stands motionless; all the blood rushes to his face. "Cursed be cowardice and covetousness both! In you are villainy and vice, that destroy virtue!" He takes the girdle, and throws it to the knight, while bitterly lamenting his faithlessness. "Cowardice," he says in a manner characteristic of the poet, "cowardice taught me to accord with covetousness, and to forsake my nature: the generosity and loyalty that belong to a knight." The lord of the chapel thinks that Gawayne has sufficiently expiated his fault by his open confession, and, moreover, that he has atoned for it by the wound received. He presents Gawayne with the girdle, as a token of the adventure, and invites him to return with him to the castle and there finish the festival in pleasures. "With my wife, who was thy keen enemy, we shall soon reconcile thee."

But Gawayne declines this offer. He wishes God's blessing on his host, and commends himself to the ladies who have so cunningly beguiled him. But how should a man escape being deceived by a woman? Did not the same thing happen to Adam, Solomon, Samson, and David? How could a man love women, and not believe them? Gawayne with thanks accepts the green girdle. He will wear it as a sign of his guilt, as a safeguard against self-sufficiency. Finally he begs the Green Knight to tell him his name. The latter says he is Bernlac de Hautdesert. He declares that the instigator of the whole affair is Morgan the Fay, Arthur's half-sister, the pupil of Merlin, who was desirous of putting Queen Guenever into deadly fear. She was the old dame whom Gawayne had seen in company with the lady. Sir Bernlac makes a last vain attempt to persuade Gawayne to remain longer at his house. Then the two men in farewell embrace each other, and each rides his way.

There is much joy at Arthur's court over Gawayne's return. The hero, sighing with grief, frankly relates his entire adventure, and shows the girdle, the token of his shame. But the king and his court comfort him with friendly words, and resolve that every knight of the Round Table shall wear a green girdle in his honour.

We have, perhaps, given this romance at greater length than was pleasing to every reader. But does not the poem deserve the fullest consideration? Here we have for the first time a conscious art of composition, capable of planning a symmetrical and attractive whole. The division of the romance into "fyttes" (pieces, sections, cantos), which earlier poets had nearly always done mechanically, of necessity follows from the organic construction of the story. Besides, this poet knows well how to hold our attention and our expectation. How concretely graphic and truly poetical is his style! His wealth of fancy and delicate feeling appear notably in the third canto, where, with great art, he varies two themes, each thrice, and describes a most questionable situation with great propriety.

Finally, all this art is in the service of moral ideas. It may be objected that our poet obtrudes the *Haec fabula docet* altogether too plainly; the reader may regret that the whole test is the work of deliberate cunning, not of the force

of circumstances or mighty passions; and that he is, therefore, at the close, almost ashamed of the sympathy with which he has followed Gawayne on his perilous journey. Nevertheless, this romance is the work of a genuine poet, and of a thinking artist. We do not merely discern the intention of presenting certain ideas, they find adequate sensuous expression; their value is brought to our consciousness in concrete human types.

Sir Gawayne differs in metrical form from the *Adventures of Arthur*, in that the long lines of each strophe have alliteration only, without rhyme, and that their number is not fixed; while the rhymed short lines at the close are introduced by a verse of one accent, in the order, a b a b a. The first strophes of the second canto, given above, illustrate this.

The transition to those creations of our poet having a decided religious colouring is made in a poem that not only suggests but directly describes a crisis in his inner life. It is rightly named *The Pearl*.

The poet had married (his lord having, perhaps, given him a home of his own as a reward for faithful service). A child, a sweet girl, radiant in innocence, had blessed this union. The father concentrated all his affection upon the child, and so exclusively that we are led to believe the mother had not long survived her birth. The dearest ideals of the thoughtful poet were embodied in his daughter. But the pitiless hand of fate tore her away at the tenderest age. The poem describes the father's feelings at her death, and tells how he was comforted.

It begins in an exalted lyrical strain, with a lament on the lost pearl, whose beauty and splendour are sung in extravagant language. We see the lonely father, spell-bound by grief and longing, lingering on the grave that hides his dearest treasure. He is there overcome by sleep, and a beautiful vision is unfolded to him. The poet finds himself in a smiling spring landscape, with stately trees and beauteous flowers, singing birds of lovely plumage and shining rocks, from which he is separated by a clear, murmuring brook. On the opposite shore he beholds his vanished pearl, more beautiful and resplendent than he had ever seen her. His attempts to reach her are vain. A discourse between the mourning father and the transfigured daughter ensues,

that fills the breast of the bereaved man now with great joy, and now with anxious pain and doubt. But all doubts are finally resolved; the father no longer wonders at the high honour vouchsafed his child in heaven. He learns to prize the dignity of innocence, and the bliss of leaving the world in unstained childhood. With his own eyes he beholds his daughter in the ranks of those that surround the Lamb of the Apocalypse. His pain passes away in joy at her happiness, and in wonder at divine wisdom and love; and his longing is purified in submission to the divine will.

Full of deep and delicate feeling, rich in thought and creative fancy, the poem was decidedly influenced by the allegorical poetry of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as regards choice, combination, and treatment of motives. Yet here, as in the *Divine Comedy*, the allegory is lifted almost to symbolism by its earnestness and intensity, and by the evident mysticism which is connected with a well-known passage of the Apocalypse. The poet modelled diction and form after those of a colleague in art from the Welsh Marches, almost contemporary with him, and the author of a *Song of Merci*, a *Song of Deo gracias*,[1] and other poems. In these there is also a close union of lyrical and didactic elements, noble language with real wealth of thought, and, more rarely, an inclination to allegory and symbolism. Here, too, we find the strophe employed by the poet of *The Pearl*; it has twelve lines with four accents, rhymed according to the scheme, a b a b a b a b b c b c, and combining rhyme with alliteration. The strophes close with a sort of refrain, to which the beginning of each following strophe is often joined by the repetition of a word. All these expedients, reminding us of the more ancient western lyrics, and, above all, of Laurence Minot's ballads, are used very consistently by the author of *The Pearl*. At the same time he increases the technical difficulties by attempting symmetrical relations of verse on a larger scale. The poem contains twenty parts, each having five strophes,[2] and, like the close

[1] Published by Furnivall in *Early English Poems and Lives of Saints*, pp. 118 and 124. To the same poet may belong the poems printed on pp. 130 and 133 of that work.

[2] In Morris's edition (*Early English Alliterative Poems*), the poem has twenty-one divisions; but the sixteenth and seventeenth are really one. One division, moreover, counts six strophes (No. 15). This is certainly not due to artistic intention, but was either an oversight of the poet or an interpolation.

and beginning of the strophes, the single parts are also united by the repetition of the same, or a related word, now and then of a homonym, while the last line of the poem corresponds with the opening one. In this most artificial form, which, according to our feeling, is little adapted to the subject, the poet works with perfect ease. His diction is faulty only in too great copiousness, and his descriptions in too much wealth and brilliancy.

Two main ideas are put forth in *The Pearl*, both already presented, if not with equal force, in *Gawayne:* the ideas of innocence (purity) and of submission to the divine will. Each of them was treated by the poet later in a special work, *Clannesse* and *Pacience*.

These, the most mature products of his art, take the ground of religious didactics. The starting-point in both poems is the Sermon on the Mount, in the gospel of St. Matthew. But as the thought is perceptive and the expression metaphorical, we have genuine poetry also in these works. But the subjective element, so strong in *The Pearl*, makes itself but occasionally felt, appearing most clearly in the introductions to the two poems. The aim of the writer, as in *Gawayne*, is to present his idea objectively. He chooses from Old Testament history those topics teaching, by the depiction of their opposites, the virtues of purity and patient submission. Thus he joins the religious epic poets of his nation, and at once reaches the highest rank among them. He is not to be compared with such men as the composers of the *Genesis* and *Exodus*, or the *Cursor mundi;* for he can measure himself with the best among the Old English religious poets. Tenderer than the author of the *Judith*, but much less vague than Cynewulf, he is superior to the former in delicacy and yields him nothing in clearness. He is excelled by none in power of expression and fresh sensuousness of description, when we take into account the youthful vigour of the language and the abundant epic tradition from which those older poets could draw. It is true, he has the advantage of wider experience and of advanced culture; with his contemporaries, however, such culture was so far from harmonious that this fact rather raises than lowers his individual status. The final impression given by these works is admiration for the poet's talent, mingled with regret that

he did not belong to a more truly epic age, or to an age that would have yielded a fitter art-style to his richer and more delicate feeling.

He uses the alliterative long line in both poems, without strophic division or rhyme. His language has, therefore, an evener and broader flow, and becomes more distinctly epic. The inner cast of these poems also betokens the artist able to group masses. This grouping has more complex proportion in *Clannesse*, where three epic subjects alternate: the deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the fall of Belshazzar, the desecrator of the temple. It is simpler and severer in *Pacience*, where only the story of Jonah is told.

The last-named work is perhaps the writer's masterpiece. In beauty of single descriptions, it does not fall behind either *Gawayne* or *Clannesse;* it excels the latter in finish of composition and equal disposal of motives, and it excels both in the evident and more practical relation of the material to the personality of the author. He plainly portrays, in the fortunes of Jonah, his own struggle for inward peace and subjection of will to Providence; and the prelude discloses the aging poet, who has felt the pains of poverty and privation, as well as loneliness.

These last works, too, oftentimes betray the influence of the allegorical school, most distinctly so in *Clannesse* where the *enfant terrible* of this school, Jehan de Meun, is expressly mentioned.

This name and the productions connected with it will soon confront us in studying one greater than the poet of the *Gawayne*.

For we are in a period that, unlike the previous one, does not force us to divide our attention among a mass of mediocre minds, but rather invites us to concentrate it upon a few great, typical figures, towering above the crowd.

III.

When the author of *Gawayne* wrote his *Clannesse* and *Pacience*, the alliterative measure, through the agency of another poem, had already become popular far beyond the borders of its original home.

This poetry also, in its origin, belongs to the west, and to the Welsh Marches; but despite its speech wavering between western and southern dialects, it soon left provincial literature, to enter the circle of national poetry. The author of the *Visio de Petro Piowman* is the oldest Middle English writer whose memory, in the broader sense, has lived to the modern age. We know the man only from his work. A doubtful and ill-substantiated tradition adds no essential feature to his portrait.

William Langland (perhaps more correctly, Langley) was born about the year 1332. He is said to have been a native of Cleobury Mortimer in Shropshire. The name of his father is given as Stacy de Rokele (Rokayle) *qui Stacius fuit generosus*. There seems, at an early time, to have been intercourse between William's family and that of the Burnels, an eminent house in Shropshire. The Burnels had by marriage acquired the manor of Shipton-under-Wychwood in Oxfordshire, belonging to the noble family of le Spenser; Stacy de Rokele rented land connected with it, and consequently had settled in Oxfordshire with his family. William received a careful education; he doubtless attended a Latin school. That he studied at the university is not quite certain, although most probable; and if he did, we naturally think of him at Oxford. The well-grown, serious, and studious youth was evidently destined for the church, but he seems to have received only the first tonsure, thus becoming *clericus*, but never priest. After the death of his father and of his patron, William led a changeful life, and alone wandered over a great part of his native country. His work shows that he came to know care and privation. But he never seems to have taken up any secular trade, nor to have tried to enter practical life. Given to study and contemplation, the activity of the world was to him a drama, which he watched with keen glance and quick sympathy, but in which he felt no call to take active part. He perhaps brought personal endeavour to bear within a narrow circle, and upon single objects, but he gained a broader field of action only as author.

His great work first presents the poet on Malvern Hills in Worcestershire. We afterwards find him married at Cornhill in London. In the last years of his life he seems

to have returned to the west. He died presumably not long after the opening of the reign of Henry IV.

Like Richard Rolle, William glowed with moral and religious passion; like the hermit of Hampole, he early asked himself the question what was the mission and destiny of man, and by what means the ideal, when recognised, might be reached. But here their paths separate. Both were recluses and wanderers, both in a sense renounced the world and retired into themselves; both had visions and described them; but they felt and did these things in quite different ways. More humane, more manly, and less exalted than Richard, William never rose to such asceticism and ecclesiastical sanctity as did his predecessor, and he probably never aimed to do so. Richard's seclusion and anxious dread of contact with the material world corresponded in William with an almost philosophic indifference or sobriety. The sublunary world that filled Richard with fear and disgust, yielded æsthetic pleasure to William. A trait at once poetic and philosophic made him enjoy the beauty of this world, and boldly conceive the doings of men, not less through the heart than the intellect. The satirical mood thus awakened was chastened and brightened by a touch of humour. William found his religious ideal in the life of Christ and in the lives of the first Christians, while Richard looked for the heavenly Jerusalem on earth. Richard's visions seem like the outcome of a morbid ecstacy; but the dreams of William make us feel that the poet stands on firm ground, while his fancy roams in the remotest spaces.

Not less unlike were their relations to the church and to humanity. Richard's immediate sphere of action was a much wider one, but the object of his study, as of his work, was but the individual as such. William, on the other hand, ever had the aggregate in view, the society living in church and state; and as his horizon was larger, so was his influence deeper and broader.

Before middle life, William, like Dante, had recognised that the world was out of joint. He too looked with longing for the deliverer who should set it right; he too, with all the powers of his soul, wrestled for the knowledge of salvation, for himself as for others; he too lifted up his voice in warning and menace, before the great and mighty of the

earth, before princes and priests; he too held up a mirror to the world, in which it saw both its own image and the ideal to which it had grown faithless.

But unlike the Italian poet, William did not attain a full and clear theory of life, and hence he failed to put together what he had lived and seen, in a symmetrical, distinctly-drawn picture, with the mighty personality of the poet for its centre. The *Vision concerning Piers Plowman* is a series of paintings whose mutual connection lies more in the intention than in actual execution, and each of them has, besides clearly illumined groups, others that seem enveloped in mist, whose outlines we may feel rather than perceive, and still others whose dim figures first receive colour and life from our fancy.

But the mind of the poet is all-pervading; it takes hold upon the heart of the reader, compels it to enter into the secret purposes of the poetry; and thus is proved, even here, despite the mass of unformed material, the superior power of Teutonic poesy, needing neither the music of language nor the charm of image to find its way to the heart, and whose very essence is directness.

What was the author's culture, the literary atmosphere in which we are to study him?

Langland's reading was by no means slight, but it was rather special than general, and somewhat one-sided.

He seems most familiar with Holy Writ and the great Latin fathers; in Roman profane literature he was acquainted with satirists, as Juvenal, and moralists, as Dionysius Cato. As he understood French, he had doubtless read the *Romance of the Rose* and *The Tournament of Antichrist*, by Huon de Mery (about 1228). Allegory dwelt, moreover, in the spirit of the age; mediæval theology had taken it from the Bible and the church fathers, and English literature had frequently employed it in religious writings. William doubtless knew such poems as Robert Grosseteste's *Castel d'amour*, of which perhaps two renderings then existed; the honest, but exceedingly formless, imitation by the monk of Sallay being probably half a century older than Langland's *Vision*. In the *Castel d'amour*, a recapitulation of the religious history of mankind, allegory is brought to bear, especially in the central part that treats of redemption; here the castle of love is the bosom of the Holy Virgin. William, however, seems to

have been impressed above all by the passage where the four daughters of the most high king, Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace,[1] debate on the redemption of man.

As regards the English writers preceding him, Langland owed most to the preachers and satirists. Especially did the poem on the *Evil Times of Edward II.* yield him caustic and vigorous satire on all classes. There were also attempts at prophecy, which were generally popular in the English Middle Ages, and were continually called forth anew by the exigencies of the times. A certain infection of mysticism was in the air; this led, of itself, to the idea of the vision as the poetic frame, and William had not to borrow it from the romance-poets.

The alliterative measure had again just come into use in the Welsh Marches when our poet began his work. William aptly chose it for his forcible, clear-cut writing, which was at once popular and noble, easy and restrained.

He put his hand to the work in the year 1362. The times and the mood of the English population were favourable to his purpose. In the year just passed, the plague had raged in the kingdom, for the second time in the reign of Edward III. Again, on the fifteenth of January, 1362, men were filled with terror by a devastating tempest, that seemed to usher in the judgment day. It was the right moment for the appearance of a prophet and preacher of repentance.

Let us consider the poem more closely. It begins as follows:

In a somer sesun, when softe was þe sonne,
I schop me in-to a schroud, A scheep as I were;
In Habite of an Hermite vnholy of werkes,
Wende I wydene in þis world, wondres to here.
Bote in a Mayes Morwnynge on Maluerne hulles
Me be-fel a ferly, A Feyrie me þouhte;
I was weori of wandringe and wente me to reste
Vndur a brod banke bi a Bourne syde,
And as I lay and leonede and lokede on þe watres,
I slumberde in A slepyng, hit sownede so murie.
Þenne gon I Meeten, A Meruelous sweuene,
Þat I was in A Wildernesse, wuste I neuer where,
And as I beo-heold in-to þe Est, an-heiȝ to þe sonne,
I sauh a Tour on A Toft [triȝely] I-maket;

1 "Mercy, Sothfastnes, Rightwysnes, Pees." Grosseteste himself owed this allegory to a homily by St. Bernard.

A Deop Dale bi-neoþe, A dungun þer-Inne,
With deop dich and derk and dredful of siht.
A Feir feld ful of folk, fond I þer bi-twene,
Of alle maner of men, þe mene and þe riche,
Worchinge and wondringe, as þe world askeþ.
Summe putten hem to þe plouȝ and pleiden hem ful seldene,
In Eringe and in Sowynge swonken ful harde,
Þat monie of þeos wasturs In Glotonye distruen.
And summe putten hem to pruide apparaylden hem þer-after,
In Cuntinaunce of cloþinge queinteliche de-Gyset;
To preyere and to penaunce putten heom monye,
For loue of vr lord liueden ful harde,
In Hope for to haue Heuene-riche blisse.[1]

Thus the most diverse classes and callings pass in review before the poet: merchants, minstrels, jesters, beggars who live in luxury; pilgrims who go to Santiago or Rome, who "went forth in their way, with many wise tales, and had leave to lie, all their life after;" mendicant friars of all four orders,[2] "preaching to the people for profit of their bellies, glozing the gospel as they like;" a pardoner, who produces a bull provided with episcopal seals, and gathers rings and brooches from the ignorant who kneeling kiss it; parsons, who beg permission of their bishops to leave their parishes, impoverished by the plague, and to live in London in order to "sing there for simony, for silver is sweet;" sergeants-at-law, whose mouths are only opened by ready money; bishops and deacons, who enter into the service of the state and the court; barons and burgesses; tradesmen of all guilds.

That "fair field full of folk" clearly represents this world. The meaning of the tower on the hill and of the deep dale is interpreted for us and the poet by a beautiful woman clothed in linen, who comes down to him from the hill. She herself is the "Holy Church," the tower is the dwelling-place of "Truth," (that is, of God himself); the dungeon in the dale is the castle of Care, whose lord is Wrong, the father of Falsehood. In answer to his questions, William is instructed as to the nature of Truth, the best of treasures. Her voice speaks audibly in the bosom of every man, and tells him that Love is the readiest way to heaven.

William begs farther: "For Mary's love of heaven, that bore that blissful child, that bought us on the rood, teach me

[1] *Piers Plowman*, ed. Skeat, Text A, v. 1–27.
[2] Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, Augustins.

by some craft to know Falsehood." "Look up to thy left," is the answer, "and see where they stand, both False (Falsehood) and Fauvel,[1] and their many companions." The poet follows her directions, and he discovers in the group a richly and strikingly decked woman. "What is this woman so strangely attired?" "That is the maid Meed (reward, bribery) who hath harmed me full oft, hath mocked my teaching; . . . . in the pope's palace she is as at home as myself, which should not be so, for Wrong is her father. . . . I ought to be better than she, I came of a better. . . . Now Meed will be married to False. Fauvel, through his fair speech, hath brought them together, and all is Guile's leading that thus she is wedded. To-morrow will be made the maiden's bridal; and there thou mayest know, if thou wilt, who they all are that belong to that lordship. Know them there if thou canst. Beware of them all, if thou willest to dwell with Truth in his bliss. I may no longer tarry. Now I leave thee to God; become a good man in spite of Covetousness." Holy Church leaves the poet to watch the preparations for the wedding, and the further developments. A great crowd has gathered to witness the solemnities; ten thousand tents are erected to accommodate them. Sir Simony and Civil, who represents office-holding, read the deed of the lovers' dowry; the document is then sealed and signed. Theology, however, opposes the marriage, and contests its legality. It is agreed to go to Westminster and have the matter decided by the king's court. Now horses are lacking; but help is soon provided for this emergency. Meed rides upon the back of a sheriff, False on that of an assizer, Fauvel on Fair Speech, and all are similarly mounted. The whole company is led by Guile. Before they reach the court, however, Soothness arrives there and tells the tale to Conscience, who imparts it to the king. The king, in this place Edward III., swears vengeance on False and Fauvel, and all their companions. Dread stands at the door, and

[1] In *Fauvel*, meaning "flattery" in Langland, we have a special application of an originally more comprehensive allegorical idea. The name *Fauvel*, in Early French and Middle English, is frequently given to animals of *favel* colour, especially to horses. In the *Roman de Fauvel*, however, it is the name of a beast, symbolising the reigning vices in church and society. The *couleur fauve* of the beast is still alluded to, though the name is, falsely, explained as a compound of *fauls* and *vel*. As Fauvel's children, are mentioned *Flaterie, Avarice, Vilenie, Varieté, Envie* and *Lascheté*. The initial letters of these words, being combined, give the word FAVVEL. See *Jahrbuch für romanische und englische Literatur*, VII, 321.

warns the menaced ones, and they all quickly flee. False flies to the friars; Guile finds refuge with the merchants, whom he serves as apprentice. Liar, hunted by all, is finally received by pardoners, who wash and clothe him, and send him into the church with pardons. Thereupon leeches, spicers, and minstrels try to get him. Finally, the mendicant friars succeed in procuring him. Meanwhile Meed is taken to Westminster. She is in great fear, but she finds many a good friend at court. She knows how to win the favour of justices and clerks by presents and promises. A confessor in the cowl of a friar, to whom she confesses her sins, absolves her for a noble, and promises her eternal salvation if she will provide the order with an expensive glass window. When she is brought before the king, he holds her bad behaviour up to her, but promises pardon if she will marry his knight, Conscience. Meed is quite willing, but Conscience strongly protests against this union, and launches a very energetic diatribe against the maid, who has caused Adam's fall, has poisoned popes, and is corrupting the holy church. Meed tries to defend herself, and attacks her opponent, but he overcomes her arguments, illustrates the results of covetousness by the example of Saul, and foretells a time when Reason shall reign in the world, and with her, Love, Humility, and Loyalty. "Meed," says Conscience, "makes of misdoers such rich people that Law (jurisprudence, the jurists) has become lord, and Loyalty is poor. . . . But Common Sense will return, and with it, Conscience, and will make Law a labourer: (that is, will deprive lawyers of their bread), such love shall arise."

The king stands by his purpose of marrying Meed to Conscience, but Conscience will not obey unless Reason counsels him to it. Reason is, therefore, summoned, and appears accompanied by Wisdom and Wit. At the same time comes Peace with a complaint against Wrong. Wrong succeeds, with the help of Meed, in gaining Wisdom and Wit over to his cause, and Peace herself is persuaded to withdraw her complaint by a present from Meed. Reason, however, is immovable, and counsels the king to carry out the strictest justice. The king declares himself ready to obey, and requests Reason to stay with him. "I am all ready to rest with thee forever," says Reason, "so Conscience

be thy counsellor." "I gladly grant that," replies the king, "God forbid he should fail. So long as I live, live we together." Then the king goes to church with his knights, and from there to dinner. At this instant the poet awakes, and the first vision ends; its allegory is sufficiently clear.

The second vision opens with a second view of the field filled with people. This time Conscience stands in their midst, a cross in his hand, and exhorts them to penitence; nor does he fail to remind sinners of the plague and the destructive hurricane. The efforts of Conscience are seconded by Repentance. The poet then arraigns the Seven Deadly Sins, partly through colourless personifications, partly through concrete types, and makes them do penance. This section is full of subtle characterisation and cutting satire. With his peculiar art, Langland always rapidly passes from the abstract to the concrete, from allegory to reality; next to sublime aphorisms are traits taken from life, and piquantly realistic. The delineation of Gluttony, who appears in the guise of a workman given to drink, is justly celebrated as an excellent genre picture in the manner of the Old Dutch school. On the way to church, Gluttony is lured into a tavern, which he leaves in the saddest condition, and the after-nausea alone moves him to repentance. When the penitential sermon has thus everywhere attained its purpose, and thousands of people have wept and wailed to Christ and his mother, the repentant sinners take their way to Saint Truth. But, who knows the way? After long roaming about, they meet a palmer coming from the Holy Land. "Knowest thou a saint whom men call Truth?" they ask him. "Nay, so God help me. I never saw a palmer seek after such a saint until this hour."

A plowman now steps forth—it is Piers[1] (Peter)—and declares himself ready to show them the way. That saint is well-known to him, he has worked for him, and has received rich pay. At the request of the pilgrims, from whom he refuses to accept money, Piers describes the way they seek in a circumstantial yet obvious allegory. "This were a wicked way without a guide," say the pilgrims. Then speaks Piers the Plowman: "By Peter the apostle, I have an half-acre to plow on the highway; were that well plowed, I would go

[1] Other forms of the name are Pers, Pierce.

with you and teach the right way." At the question of a noble lady as to what the women shall do in the mean time, Piers prescribes useful occupations and works of love to each of them, according to her station. To a knight who offers to help him with his work, he replies that it will be sufficient if he protects the holy church and Piers himself, hunts wild and harmful animals, and kindly treats the poor and dependent. It is then described how Piers sets to work, and many pilgrims help him, and how, by the assistance of Hunger, he compels the idle who oppose his orders, in which connection occurs a very interesting allegory concerning questions of national economy. This is followed by a prophecy of a famine.

In view of this impending calamity, Truth exhorts Piers to renewed labour, and grants him and his heirs a full pardon, in which all may share who help him work. A priest wishes to see the pardon. Piers unfolds the bull; it contains nothing but the words: *Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam eternam; qui vero mala, in ignem eternum.* "I can find no pardon," says the priest, "that means only, do well and have well, do evil and have evil." Full of vexation, Piers tears the bull, and says: "I shall cease of my sowing, and be not so busy about my livelihood! Prayer and penance shall hereafter be my plow. . . . *Ne solliciti sitis*, is said in the Gospel. . . . The fowls in the field, who finds them food in the winter? When it freezes, they need food and have no garner to go to; but God provides for them all." During the dispute that ensues between Piers and the priest, the poet wakes and finds himself without food or money on Malvern Hills, the sun standing in the south. William long meditates on the import of his dream, on Piers the Plowman and his pardon, and on his dispute with the priest. He comes to the conclusion that Do-well is better than pardon. "The pope," he says, "hath power to grant pardon to the the people, to let them pass into joy without penance. This is a part of our belief, as we are taught by learned men: *Quodcunque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in coelis.* And so I honestly believe (the Lord forbid it else) that pardon and penance and prayers do save souls that have sinned seven times deadly. But to trust to Triennials is, methinks, certainly not so safe for the soul as is to do well.

Hence I advise you, men that are rich on earth, be ye never the bolder to break the Ten Commandments, upon trust of your treasure to procure Triennials. And especially ye mayors and master-judges that have the wealth of this world, and are held wise to purchase your pardon and the pope's bulls: at the dreadful day of doom, when the dead shall rise and all come before Christ to yield accounts, . . . had ye then a bag full of pardons and provincial letters, though ye be found in the fraternity among the four orders, and have indulgences double-fold, unless Do-well help you, I would not give for your pardon a magpie's tail. Hence I counsel all Christians to cry for Christ's mercy, and beseech Mary his mother to be our intercessor, that God give us grace, ere we go hence, such works to do while we be here, that after our death-day, Do-well may rehearse, at the day of doom, we did as he commanded."

Thus closes the *Visio Wilhelmi de Petro Plowman*, in the more limited sense. The rest of the poem deals with the problems suggested at the close of the first part: what is Do-well, and what are Do-bet and Do-best? What is virtue in its different stages?

In his search for Do-well, William, in a vision, meets various allegorical personages, viz.: Thought, Wit, and his wife Study, Clergy (learning), who has Scripture to wife. By degrees he learns, from different points of view, more concerning the dwelling-place and nature of Do-well, Do-bet, and Do-best, and hears, by way of episode, many discussions on matrimony, on the subtle questions and quibblings of theologians, and on the wealth of the clergy. But hesitation and doubt always remain and raise new problems. William gets into a dispute with Clergy on the worth of knowledge as regards the final goal of man, heaven; and William is of opinion that unlettered honesty has a better prospect of gaining everlasting life than Clergy.

At about this point, William's work upon his poem was long interrupted. The fragment of a continuation [1] still preserved, though later discarded by the poet, shows that he was uncertain how to spin longer the thread of his allegory. He seems to have found for its completion neither the necessary light nor the necessary leisure until the year 1377.

[1] Ed. Skeat, A-text, passus XII., p. 137*, *et seq.*

He thoroughly revised the already existing portions of his poem, as appears principally in additions, and then he carried further his *Visio de Dowel, Dobet et Dobest secundum Wit et Resoun.*

The nature of Do-well is revealed in three visions. Doctrine and observation, the subjective and the objective, are here so involved that discussion of details in their proper sequence would require much space. The poet's purpose becomes most clear in the portrait of Haukin, a minstrel and wafer-vender, who typifies active life, but whose coat is soiled with the dirt-spots of the Seven Deadly Sins. Conscience and Patience persuade him to consider his ways and repent. We conceive the central idea of Do-well to be uprightness in all things, founded on the fear of God.

Do-bet is the type of charity. Hence, in the first vision of Do-bet, we find the poet speaking with Anima (the soul), who explains the nature of charity on the basis of the first Epistle to the Corinthians (Chapter XIII.), and other passages of Holy Writ. When William expresses a wish to know Charity, Anima answers that this can only be by the help of Piers the Plowman: the clerks can only know by means of words and works, but Piers can see deeper and read the will. Because Charity has gone out of the world, because men believe mere faith suffices, the world is out of joint. Covetousness now rules all hearts, worldly possessions have poisoned the servants of the church. "When Constantine benevolently endowed the holy church with lands and people, lordships and rents, men heard an angel cry loud at Rome, *Dos ecclesiae* hath this day drunk venom, and all that have Peter's power are poisoned." [1]

In the next vision William sees the Tree of Charity itself; it is supported by three props, the three persons of the Godhead. Piers the Plowman is the gardener of the tree, and explains its meaning to William. But the apples that, at William's wish, he shakes down from the tree, are gathered by Satan, who takes them into the limbo of hell. Then Piers calls upon the Son and the Holy Ghost to take the fruits from the devil, and William, in quick succession, contemplates the whole course of the mystery of the incarnation

[1] Compare Walther von der Vogelweide and Dante.

and Christ's life on earth, to the moment when he is betrayed by Judas.

The dreamer wakes and, with anxious longing, seeks Piers the Plowman. In a new vision he meets Abraham, who represents faith, and Spes (hope) who are also looking for Piers. William travels in their company to Jerusalem; on the road they see near them a Samaritan riding the same way. They soon find a wounded man lying on the wayside. Faith and Hope pass by but the Samaritan takes pity on him, cares for him, and bears him to an inn called *Lex Christi*. William offers to become the Samaritan's servant. The latter declines, saying: "Many thanks! but thy friend and thy fellow thou shalt find me at need." In farther conversation the Samaritan instructs William in the deepest mysteries of faith, and tells him how he shall unite faith and charity.

The last vision of Do-bet represents Christ's entrance into Jerusalem, his crucifixion and his death. Christ, in whom the idea of Do-bet, or of charity, is completely realised, appears in the armour of Piers the Plowman; that is, in human nature. We are present at the struggle between Life and Death, between Light and Darkness, and, when Christ lies in the tomb, we hear the dispute between Truth and Mercy, Righteousness and Peace. Then comes an account of Christ's descent into hell and his triumph over Satan, according to the gospel of Nicodemus. The evil spirits hide themselves; there is a sound of angels singing and playing on harps; Truth, Peace, and Righteousness embrace and kiss each other; Truth strikes up a *Te deum laudamus*, and Love sings to it, *Ecce quam bonum et jucundum fratres habitare in unum*. Then the dreamer wakes at the ringing of the Easter bells, and calling wife and daughter, bids them "Rise and reverence God's resurrection, and creep to the cross on your knees, and kiss it as a jewel; God's blessed body it bore for our salvation, and it frighteth the fiend; for such is its might that no grisly ghost may glide where it shadoweth."

Mankind is redeemed, and death overcome by love; but in order that the fruits of this victory may benefit man, the intervention of Do-best is requisite, typifying the consummation of the good in the power of Christ, the efficacy of the

church, whose soul is Christ, and whose servants above all need the virtue of self-denying humility. Hence the last two visions of the poem relate the history of the church from the first Whitsuntide. Grace makes Piers his plowman, and gives him four oxen, the evangelists, four stots, the great Latin church fathers, and four seeds, the cardinal virtues.

Thereupon Piers builds the house of Unity, the holy church, receives from Grace a cart called Christendom, on which to load his sheaves, and two horses for his cart: Contrition and Confession. Priesthood is made field-guard, while Grace goes with Piers as far as the world reaches, to sow truth. Pride prepares to attack the Christians, and Conscience bids them all seek refuge in the house of Unity.

Antichrist appears, tears up all the crop of truth and plants weeds. The friars show him honour; hundreds follow his banner, borne by Pride. Conscience calls Nature to help, and she sends out devastating diseases; Death strides about with Age in the van as standard-bearer; kings and knights, emperors and popes, are stricken to the dust. In answer to the prayer of Conscience, Nature pauses to give men time to grow better. Then Fortune and Lechery, Avarice and Simony, immediately resume their work. Fortune is married to Life, and bears him Sloth, who weds Despair, and the two oppress Conscience. Conscience calls upon Age for help. Age struggles with Life, who flees to physicians; when he sees that death does not fear these, he gives himself up to Revel. But now the poet, too, is seized by Age, is robbed of his hearing, his teeth, and the free use of his limbs. He perceives the approach of Death, and takes refuge in the house of Unity.

Thus we find William, with Christianity, in the fortress whose constable is Conscience. It is beleaguered by seven giants (the deadly sins), who serve the cause of Antichrist, and by their confederates. Envy and Hypocrisy are especially dangerous. Those wounded by Hypocrisy are healed by Shrift, but they long for a gentler physician. They ask for Flatterer, a friar, and Conscience is weak enough to give him entrance. Brother Flatterer is to heal Contrition, and is so successful that his patient forgets how to cry and weep, and sinks into a deep slumber. Sloth and Pride open a fresh attack. Conscience in vain calls upon

Contrition for aid; the physic of Brother Flatterer is showing its power. Conscience cries: "By Christ! I will become a pilgrim, and walk as wide as the world stretcheth to seek Piers Plowman, that he may destroy Pride. . . . Now Nature avenge me, and send me good hap and safety, till I have Piers the Plowman." "And he wept for Grace till I awoke."

Thus close the visions of William—in deep distress and in anxious waiting. The last words of the poem sound like a note of despair, a wail from the Teutonic conscience feeling the gulf between the ideal and the real. From such anguish of conscience, at a later time, was born the German reformation.

The question that first presents itself, Who or what is Piers Plowman? is almost as hard to answer as that more frequently put: What is the Dantean *Veltro?*

Piers Plowman is clearly the deliverer from the bondage of sin, error, and death; and hence, as is seen in the *Vita de Dobet*, when disclosing the highest meaning of his being, he represents human nature united in Christ with the Godhead. In Do-best he stands for the office of teacher and judge, conferred upon the church by Christ, for the church itself, so far as Christ really lives and works in her, for the ideal church as opposed to the visible. Piers Plowman seems to signify nearly the same at his first appearance; but then the individual and human side of his nature is more conspicuous. Piers there may be said to typify human nature as blessed with divine grace, hearing God's voice in its conscience, and fulfilling its life-task in the simplicity of faith, and in good works.

The name of the hero has reference to the first epistle to the Corinthians (X. 4), where there is mention of the spiritual rock from which the Israelites, led by Moses, drank, "and that Rock was Christ." *Petrus id est christus* stands also in our text (B. XV., 206). Piers's calling as husbandman is explained in the allegory in Do-best. It is moreover clear how the choice of a station so humble and worthy and so often despised, must in other respects also have seemed fitting to the poet for his hero.

Piers Plowman is one of those poems that embody the labour of a lifetime. Langland again returned in his later

life (in 1393) to his work, to revise it anew. The result is a text often expanded in detail, and in which some passages have changed position, many inequalities have been removed, many a harshness softened, but in which the vigour of style has sometimes been weakened.

In the intervals of the three revisions, there passed an eventful and most stirring period; and while the poem itself was not without influence upon events—of this we shall speak later—it mirrors, as well, many a phase of their development.

An animal fable, inserted in the prologue of the middle-text, reminds us of the early part of Richard II.'s reign, and of the wide-spread discontent regarding the influence upon him of his uncle, John of Gaunt. The quick decline of the king's popularity, dating from about 1392, appears in the words addressed to the king by Langland in the latest text, (IV., 208, *et seq.*): "Unseemly forbearance, sister to bribery, and this itself have almost brought it about, if Mary does not help thee, that no land loves thee, and least of all thine own."

The progress of religious agitation is also reflected in the growth of the poem. It is significant that, in the middle text, passages increase that point prophetically to the future, whether they foretell a kingdom of peace or a reformation of the clerical orders by an energetic king. The following remarkable lines are well-known:[1] "But there shall come a king, and confess you religiouses, and beat you as the Bible telleth for breaking of your rule; . . . . then shall the abbot of Abingdon, and all his issue forever, have a knock of a king, and incurable the wound."

Here the query arises as to Langland's attitude toward Wiclif and the tendency he represented.

In all practical questions, Langland and Wiclif were of the same opinion. We find in both the same main ethical purpose, the same wrath at the moral decay of the church, at the covetousness of the clergy, and the life led by the friars, pardoners, and pilgrims. Both distinguish between the church of Christ and its outward form in the hierarchy. Many favourite ideas, images, and allusions are common to both; Wiclif may have borrowed some of them from Lang-

[1] B. X., 317, *et seq.*

land. The great difference between them, despite this, remains in the fact that Langland nowhere utters an opinion decidedly antagonistic to Catholic doctrine, as it then was. With all his boldness he has a conservatism that grows with his years, a certain caution that at times prevents him from speaking the last word, or from forming a definite conclusion. He always shows great regard for the papacy; he denies none of its prerogatives, even though he deems it safer to base his salvation on Do-well than on a papal pardon.

Nevertheless, Langland's work was that of a reformer; and the English reformers of the sixteenth century were right when they saw in him a forerunner.

The Puritan element, which was destined to impress itself so powerfully upon English life and literature in the seventeenth century, broke forth for the first time in Langland. One of the greatest in the majestic line of English poets whose muse was inspired by the highest interests of man, those of religion, he was the worthy predecessor of a Milton. He hardly equals, in purely poetical talent, and still less in artistic gift the author of *Gawayne*. He shows the true power of plastic creation only in genre-painting. But he excels him in breadth of view, in fulness and depth of thought, and in power of pathos. Out of somewhat ruder materials, he created a style whose dignity, vigour, and national spirit, endure beside the more perfect art of later and greater poets.

APPENDIX.

A.—(BOOK I., CHAPTER IV., VIII).

THE POEMS ASCRIBED TO CAEDMON.

I do not intend, in this place, to discuss at any length the legend of Caedmon, as reported by Bede. I would say on the subject merely this: 1. There is no reasonable ground for doubting that an individual of the name of Caedmon really lived at Streoneshalh, in the time of the abbess Hild. 2. We may take it for granted that this Caedmon actually composed a large amount of religious poetry on the subjects mentioned by Bede. 3. There is no reason whatever to disbelieve Bede's statement that Caedmon, before entering the cloister, was a layman with no literary education. 4. We may even go so far as to admit that Caedmon was not known to have composed, nor even recited, any songs before a rather advanced period of his life; that his poetical talent was first stirred by a religious impulse; and that, soon after it had manifested itself, Caedmon turned monk. 5. We may safely assume that Bede had read at least some of Caedmon's poems, and that in his account of the poet he gave a pretty faithful translation of the hymn said to be Caedmon's very first attempt, and most probably being, to say the least, one of his earliest works.

There, then, remains the question, What theory is to be held as to the English poems that have been ascribed to Caedmon? Let us first consider the Old Northumbrian text of the "hymn," preserved at the end of a MS. of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, and in the main agreeing with the version given by Aelfred in his translation of Bede's work.

I. It is well known that in 1705 Wanley published the Northumbrian lines in question, in his *Catalogus*, p. 287, designating them as "*canticum illud Saxonicum Caedmonis a Bæda . . . memoratum*" and as "*omnium quae in nostra*

lingua etiamnum extent monumentorum pene vetustissimum." From that time to the present day, the opinion prevalent among scholars not unacquainted with this part of Wanley's *Catalogue*, has been that in them we have "the exact words," or nearly so, "of the poet."[1] The early date of the handwriting in which they have come down to us, though strongly questioned by Conybeare (see *Illustrations*, p. 6, note 2), as well as their close agreement with Bede's translation, seemed to exclude any reasonable doubt. A few years ago, however, Prof. R. Wülcker in an essay *Ueber den hymnus Caedmons*, published in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, III. pp. 348–357, attempted to show that the claimed authenticity of the Northumbrian poem was not only doubtful, but highly improbable, nay impossible. Through the author's kindness this article reached me when the original MS. of the present volume was finished, but the printing had not yet begun. A careful perusal of the paper soon convinced me that Prof. Wülcker's arguments could easily be refuted, and in pondering the matter anew, fresh evidence seemed to me to arise for the genuineness of the hymn. I, therefore, left unchanged what I had written, reserving the task of refuting the Professor's opinion for a special article. To my great pleasure, however, this task was taken from me by Prof. Zupitza, whose excellent essay on Caedmon's Hymn, published in the *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum*, XXII. p. 210, *et seq.*, contained the greater part of what I had meant to say on the subject, together with some things I should probably have left unsaid. This being the case, I shall merely indicate the chief points of the question, referring the reader for more ample information to Prof. Zupitza's essay.

The main force of Wülcker's argument lies in the following syllogism: According to Bede's own statement, his Latin translation of Caedmon's hymn gives only the sense, not the order of words of the original. Now the Northumbrian poem agrees so closely with the Latin version that, supposing it to be its original, that version would have been a very faithful, not at all a free one. *Ergo*, the Northumbrian poem cannot be looked upon as the original in question.

In answer to this argument many things might be said.

[1] Henry Sweet in Warton-Hazlitt, II., p. 15.

It might be hinted, that a translator's excuse for not rendering all the beauties of his original should never be taken too literally. Moreover, attention might be called to the fact that (setting aside the omission of some epithets, which did not escape Wülcker's attention) the order of the words in Bede's translation does, after all, in many instances diverge from the original. Prof. Wülcker, it is true, has tried to show that it would have been easy for Bede to follow more closely the Northumbrian text, without spoiling his Latin; but if this must be granted with regard to the beginning, I absolutely deny it with regard to the latter part of the poem. I for one confess my inability to imagine any form of the original poem to which Wülcker's argument might not have been applied with the same propriety, as to the form that has come down to us. But the chief point is that put forward by Prof. Zupitza, to wit, that the expression *ordo ipse verborum*, in Bede, undoubtedly means "arrangement of speech" in a wider sense, including rhythm, alliteration, and parallelism of synonymous phrases.

Respecting the age of the handwriting in which the Northumbrian lines have been preserved, Prof. Wülcker is inclined to trust to Conybeare's impression of it, who thinks it "the work of the eleventh or twelfth century, and of an inexperienced scribe;" but how little Conybeare's authority is to be relied on in this question, may be seen in Zupitza's essay.

Prof. Wülcker then attempts to show that the language and orthography do not point to a period anterior to the tenth or the beginning of the following century. Here is his greatest failure: for a comparison of the hymn with the earliest known monuments of the English language yields evidence that it belongs to the same period. Many of its orthographic peculiarities, it is true, occur also in Northumbrian texts of later date; but the consistency with which some of them are carried out,—as in the case of the final *i* in *mæcti*, *éci*, the *æ* in the genitive ending *æs* and in the preterit *tiádæ*, the *a* for *ea* in *uard*, *barnum* (as for *middungeard*, cf. *Anglia*, I. p. 522), the *ct* for *ht*, etc.—together with such forms as *fadur*, *astelidæ*, is irresistible evidence of the poem's early origin. Add to this the fact that in the nine long lines making up the hymn not a single form can be pointed out

that we should not expect to find in a text written down in the first half of the eighth century; whereas in any equal portion of writing belonging to later centuries, I could easily show at least half a dozen.

Finally, it cannot be doubted that the poem we presume to call Caedmon's hymn was regarded as such by King Aelfred, not only because he reproduced it, with only slight variations, in his translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, but chiefly on account of the way in which he introduces its quotation. The passage *Hic est sensus, non autem ordo verborum*, etc., following the Latin version in Bede, is, of course, left out by him; but there is a clear allusion to it in his rendering of the phrase of Bede preceding the quotation: *Quorum iste est sensus*—*þâra endebyrdnes þis is; endebyrdnes* meaning precisely *ordo*, not *sensus*. According to Wülcker, Aelfred meant simply to say something like, "They run as follows;" but this explanation of the king's words is altogether inadmissible.[1] Granted that upon ordinary occasions Aelfred, even when about to quote only a translation or merely the general tenor of somebody's speech, *might* have written, "This is the succession" (or "order") "of his words;" I maintain that he *could* not have written thus in the present case, with Bede's text before him. Supposing him not to have been convinced that he was giving the very words of Caedmon, why, for instance, should he not have used, instead of *endebyrdnes*, such words as *andgit* or *þôht?*

II. I come to the poems contained in the Bodleian MS. Jun. XI., and ascribed to Caedmon by Junius. Hickes, it will be remembered, was the first to question their authenticity, and from the beginning of the eighteenth century down to our own times, the learned author of the *Thesaurus* has found many followers as well as adversaries of his opinion; the former, however, as time went on, prevailing more and more over the latter. It is not my intention to enter upon the details of this literary war waged with alternating success; especially as the arguments used on both sides, till a very recent epoch, did not denote any great insight into the means with which such a question as this could be brought to issue. A favourite topic of discussion, among others, was this, whether the agreement between the beginning of the Old

[1] Compare Zupitza, l. c. p. 218.

English *Genesis* and Caedmon's hymn, as given in Bede, was such as to warrant the ascribing of the former to our poet. Nearly all the writers who discussed this subject seem to have argued upon the supposition that the hymn sung by Caedmon in his dream was afterwards incorporated by him into his poetical version of the book of Genesis. Even Mr. Sweet, in his able *Sketch of the History of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*,[1] says, "We may have in the earlier lines the rough draft, which appears in the later MS. in a revised and expanded form." Now the truth is that in Bede there is not a single word to be found to the effect that the hymn he translates into Latin is to be regarded as the beginning, or in any way as part, of Caedmon's later Genesis-poem. He says, it is true, that Caedmon upon awaking remembered the words he had sung in his dream, and added to them many more in the same style. But this, according to Bede's account, happened before the poet had entered the convent, and before the "series of Scripture-history" had been expounded to him. When speaking of Caedmon's Bible-poetry, the historian says nothing whatever to remind us of the poet's first essay. The question, therefore, whether the agreement between the opening lines of the Genesis-poem and Caedmon's hymn be more or less striking, has nothing to do with the question of the authorship of the so-called Caedmonian poems. Caedmon may more or less have repeated himself, or another poet may have more or less imitated him. What critic will be so confident as to decide which of the two actually happened, considering that the object of imitation, so far as preserved, consists of only nine lines, not distinguished by any high poetical merit?

Before, however, putting the question whether the poems contained in the Junian MS. were composed by Caedmon or not, an accurate examination and analysis of the same should be first attempted. Are the entire contents of the MS. to be ascribed to a single poet? If not, how many hands or minds are to be distinguished in them?

Now the most superficial examination shows at once that the so-called "second part of Caedmon," containing the New Testament poems, is widely different from the first, as well in manner and style as in metrical and linguistic pecul-

[1] See Warton-Hazlitt, II. p. 15.

iarities. This difference is, indeed, so obvious that the only thing to be wondered at is that it escaped the acute and learned Junius. It was remarked by Hickes; it was more clearly seen by Thorpe. Bouterwek, in the introduction to his edition, p. ccxxxiv., insisted on the dialectical varieties between the two parts, and gave a list of what seemed to him the chief phonetic, and some inflectional peculiarities of the second. It must be said, however, that, strictly speaking, the only inference to be drawn from such discrepancies as those remarked by Bouterwek would be that the scribe who copied the second part[1] either himself belonged to, or used a MS. written in, a district having a different dialect from the first part, and that possibly both causes worked together. But fresh evidence, whether merely touched upon or expanded, has been produced since,[2] the substance of which, together with some new matter, I have worked into the characterisation of the poems making up the "second part," in the eighth chapter of my first book. There can hardly remain any doubt that these poems belong to a much later period than the Old Testament poems contained in the same MS.

To close at once with the "second part," I observe that the first to see that it really consisted of three different poems, or fragments of poems, most probably having different authors, was Dr. Max Rieger.

III. A more accurate analysis of the first part was given in 1860, by Dr. Ernst Götzinger, in a dissertation bearing the rather odd title: *Ueber die Dichtungen des Angelsachsen Caedmon und deren Verfasser* (Göttingen). By a comparison of the composition, style, and phraseology of the three poems, Dr. Götzinger shows that the paraphrases of the books of Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel must be ascribed to three different authors. His phonological observations are of less consequence; but most unhappy is the inference he draws from them, as well as from the variations in phraseology, with respect to the age of the Genesis-poem, which he thinks to be of later date than the two other paraphrases.

[1] The handwriting of the second part is another and more negligent one than that of the first.

[2] I chiefly refer to the brief characterisation in Dietrich's essay *Zu Caedmon*, published in the *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum*, X., p. 311; to the metrical observations in various passages of Dr. Rieger's treatise on *Alt- und Angelsächsische Verskunst*; and to the remarks on the style and manner of the poems in Heinzel's essay *Ueber den Stil der altgermanischen Poesie*, Strassburg and London, 1875.

As for the rest, Dr. Götzinger does not see the necessity of conceding interpolations in any of the three poems, though such had already been assumed by earlier critics, notably by Bouterwek, in his edition of Caedmon, I., p. cxl., and by Dietrich, *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum*, X., p. 310.

IV. Dietrich's brief remark concerning the interpolator shows that he fully appreciated some of the chief peculiarities in the manner of the poet who wrote v. 235–851 of *Genesis*, and that he had a tolerably clear notion of the portion of that poem to be ascribed to him.[1] But the first exactly to determine the beginning as well as the end of the episode, and to show that it formed part of an originally independent poem, differing in manner, style, metre, and language from the bulk of the Genesis-poem, was Prof. E. Sievers in his essay, *Der Heliand und die angelsächsische Genesis*, Halle, 1875.[2] The most interesting part, however, in Prof. Sievers's essay is the discovery that in all these respects the episode, while standing alone in Old English poetry, is most nearly related to the Old Saxon *Heliand*. This relation appears very strikingly in the language and diction. Many formulas are to be found in the episode which, occurring either very rarely or not at all, in other Old English poems, are frequently employed in the *Heliand*. There are even a few words or word-combinations—such as *wær*, *wærlîce* (for *sôð*, *sôðlîce*), *strîð* (for *sacu*), the preterit *bedrôg*= "deceived," the use of *swâ hwâ swâ* and *swâ hwæt swâ*,[3]—which must be pronounced quite un-English, but very good Old Saxon. From this Prof. Sievers infers that the poem to which our episode formerly belonged was originally written in Old Saxon, by the author of the *Heliand;* that an Englishman who had learned German in Germany translated it into his own language, somewhat expanding and enlarging it; and that this translation, having lost its latter part, was, in the course of the tenth century, interpolated in a more extensive Genesis-poem, of English growth. As may be seen from the eighth chapter of my first book, these conclusions, from the first, did not strike me as inevitable. Nor has my

[1] He says that the interpolator's writing is more diffuse than that of the earlier poet, but that he displays poetical power, at least in the exposition of characters, as may be seen in his portrayal of Satan, and in the temptation-scene.

[2] Sievers also showed that the author of the episode largely drew from the Latin poem *De origine mundi*, by Avitus.

[3] Observe also such a form as *géng* for *geóng*.

opinion been altered since writing that chapter, notwithstanding a certain amount of new matter with which Prof. Sievers, in his edition of the *Heliand*, has tried to strengthen his argument. No doubt, an Englishman, having lived, perhaps still living, in Germany, and translating an Old Saxon work into English, might easily be induced, by the great affinity of the two idioms, to adopt from his original some words and phrases unknown to his own language. But is it probable that, while on the whole writing in Good English (though employing many new formulas), it would have escaped him that an Englishman did not say *wær* (Old Saxon *wâr*), but *sôð*; not *strîð*, but *sacu?* I repeat that, supposing Sievers's theory to be true, we must expect to find in the fragment either a greater number of purely un-English terms, or none at all of this grievous kind. If it is a translation, we must expect, too, to meet with some cases where, in consequence of the lines being turned into another idiom, the alliteration has been obliterated. Now, though we may point out some instances in which, by translating the formulas used into Old Saxon, we get two "staves" in the first half-line, instead of but one, there is not a single instance where alliteration is entirely wanting, or where its laws are in any way violated, in consequence of the foreign formulas employed by the poet. Sievers, it is true, says, on p. 14, that in v. 540 the alliteration has been destroyed by turning the well-known Old Saxon formula *têcan gitôgian* into the English *tâcen ôðiéwan;* but if the English formula, as such, lacks alliteration, the line in which it occurs is construed in perfect harmony with the laws of alliterative measure:

nê þû mê ôð*ié*west *æ*nig tâcen.[1]

It will be evident to every reader of Dr. Rieger's treatise on Old Saxon and Anglo-Saxon versification that by exchanging the verb *ôðiéwan*, in this line, for the Old Saxon *gitôgian*, the alliteration would be spoiled.[2] If we, therefore, admit Sievers's supposition, we must further concede either that the English translator transposed the order of words in the second half-line, or that by being turned into

[1] Compare Cynewulf's *Christ*, V. 839.
þ*æ*r bið ôð*ý*wed *e*gsa mâra.

[2] The rhyming letter being *t*, the word *tâcen* should precede *æ*nig, both on account of the metrical rule concerning the rhyming letter in the second half-line, and in consequence of the laws of accentuation.

English the line, far from losing its rhyme, first got its correct alliterative shape. Now it is true that in replacing the Old Saxonisms found in the fragment by their English equivalents, (for instance, if in v. 681 we were to write *sôðum wordum* for *wærum wordum*), the alliteration would now and then be sacrificed. But can we imagine an English translator to have been at once so nice with regard to metre, and so unscrupulous in the handling of his own language, as to alter Old Saxon formulas only when alliteration was safe, or (as in the case of v. 540) could be preserved by transposition, but whenever this did not seem quite easy, to leave unchanged even such words as must have been entirely incomprehensible to his countrymen?

On the other hand, I can easily imagine a learned Old Saxon monk, one of the foreign scholars attracted to England by King Aelfred, writing the English language with ease, and on the whole even with purity, yet unable entirely to avoid unidiomatic terms, especially when clinging to alliterative formulas familiar to him from his youth.

At all events, then, two Genesis-poems are to be distinguished, which, following Sievers, we shall call A and B. In my opinion, the latter poem (B), represented by v. 235–851 of *Genesis*, was composed during the second half (or, more exactly, the last quarter) of the ninth century. According to Sievers, it must have been turned into English at about the same time. The question now arises: Is it to be ascribed to an earlier or to a later period than B? or may they belong nearly to the same epoch?

V. Sievers is inclined to assume the priority of A, thinking it possible that the poet of A himself worked the fragment of B, then extant, into his own poetry (see above). In the first book of the present work, ch. iv. and viii., I maintain the contrary opinion, calling A *the Elder*, B *the Younger Genesis*, and accounting for the loss of the latter part of B by the assumption that the scribe or reviser of A availed himself of the later Genesis-poem only to fill up the *lacunae* in the text of the earlier one.

The chief arguments touched upon in my fourth chapter, as indicative of the high antiquity of A, concern the composition, style, and spirit of the poem, the epic simplicity and severity pervading it. Great stress is laid on the fact that in

this poem epic fulness and a deep religious emotion are found unaccompanied by the sentimental mood characteristic of later writers. It would be easy to enlarge upon these features, adding a great number of new illustrations to those given in the text, and confronting them with parallel passages from other Old English poems. I am, however, of opinion that this would be of but little avail for such readers as have not read the poems in question; whereas, those who have will scarcely require it. As to the class of readers wont to mete out the confidence to be placed in an author's conclusions in exact proportion to the number of pages and of learned quotations he has used in argument,—and this class is much more numerous than is generally presumed, consisting chiefly of people who call themselves scholars,—I confess I don't value their assent so highly as to be willing to put myself to much trouble for the sake of gaining it.

Of the language of the *Elder Genesis*, an exhaustive and truly critical examination is still wanting. Dr. Götzinger's attempt to prove the language of the Genesis-poem, as a whole, of later origin than the language of *Exodus* and *Daniel*, must be pronounced a decided failure. But we must not forget that inquiries of this kind were much more difficult to make in 1860 than they would be now. Since the appearance of Grein's *Sprachschatz*, for instance, every beginner may easily avoid errors like that which Dr. Götzinger falls into concerning the word *fæle*, which he calls, on p. 44 of his essay, *ein sehr junges Wort*, apparently unaware of the fact that it occurs in what may be regarded as the very earliest among extant English poems, namely, in *Widsîth*.

Still, even at this time, an attempt to determine the approximate age of the *Earlier Genesis* from an examination of the language would meet with great difficulties, and would have to grapple with very delicate questions. Not only that here, as in similar cases, allowance would have to be made for the modernisation the poem underwent at the hands of later scribes; in the lexicological part of his inquiry, the critic would have to show himself fully aware of the poet's individuality, of the difference, for instance, existing between the author of the *Earlier Genesis* and the authors of *Exodus* or of *Elene*.

As to the character of our poet, I depict him, in my fourth

chapter, as a grand and noble mind, wanting, however, a more refined culture; as an author apparently belonging to an epic age, yet showing in his work but few traces of that enthusiasm for the "pride and circumstance" of war, and for the conventional ideas of thegnhood, common to the propagators of the national epic. In short, I represent him as answering, in all essential points, to the idea we are entitled to form of the poet Caedmon. I do not wish to go beyond this. I am far from insinuating that we should be, in any way, justified in applying to our poet the name of Caedmon, except by courtesy alone. Still, an additional circumstance bearing upon this question, and already alluded to in my fourth chapter, perhaps deserves to be brought nearer to my readers. It concerns a rather striking correspondence in phraseology between Caedmon's "hymn" and the *Earlier Genesis*.

The epithets serving to designate God in the Hymn are the following; 1, *hefænrîces uard*, 2, *moncynnes uard*, 3, *metud*, 4, *uuldurfadur*, 5, *êci dryctin* (occurring twice), 6, *hâleg scepen*, 7, *freá allmectig*. Now, turning to Prof. Sievers's list of similar expressions occurring in A, we find No. 1 employed four times, No. 2 twice, No. 3 three and twenty times, besides the combinations in which the word occurs, No. 5 eleven times, No. 7 eleven times. The only expressions not found in A are *wuldorfæder* (No. 4), instead of which it has *wuldorcyning*, four times, and *hâleg scepen*, (No. 6), or as Aelfred's version has it, *hâlig scyppend*, the word *scyppend* being used in A only with *his* (once) or with *ûre* (five times).

If, for comparison's sake, we take up another English poem, especially rich in expressions of this kind, namely Cynewulf's *Christ*, instead of but two, three of the above-mentioned epithets are entirely wanting (Nos. 1, 2, and 6). On the other hand, the word *wuldorfæder* here occurs, but only once, whereas Cynewulf does not employ it at all in any of his other works.

We may, then, be permitted to say that, though it would be rash to draw any positive inference from the phraseological correspondence pointed out, yet, considering it in connection with other features of the *Earlier Genesis*, it would seem to be deserving of some regard.

While writing these additional pages for the English edition of the present work, I received the last number of the *Anglia* (Vol. V. No. 1), containing, on pp. 124–133, a short essay on the *Earlier Genesis* by Prof. Ebert. The chief object of this essay is a comparison of the poem[1] with the corresponding parts of the book of Genesis in the Vulgate. Having carefully perused it, I am happy to state that I find nothing to alter in the account given of the *Earlier Genesis* in the fourth chapter of my first book. But I must say, in this place, a few words on the inference the learned author thinks himself entitled to draw from the results of his inquiry into Bede's account of Caedmon and his poetry.

According to Prof. Ebert, it is evident that the poem in question could not have been composed by Caedmon: 1, Because it is the work of a learned poet, having himself studied the Bible, and writing with the Holy Book before him; 2, Because it is an epic poem, whereas the Professor infers from Bede's narrative that Caedmon's songs must have had the character of hymns.

As to the first point, I confess I have but a very imperfect notion both of the strength of Caedmon's memory, and of the manner in which he was taught, and the work of paraphrasing the Bible was carried on between him and his teachers. I only venture to observe that from Bede's words, *At ipse cuncta quae audiendo discere poterat*, REMEMORANDO SECUM, *et quasi mundum animal*, RUMINANDO *in carmen dulcissimum convertebat*, we may safely assume that Caedmon not simply translated his daily lesson, line by line, but made, in some places, curtailments and transpositions of the same kind as are to be found in the *Earlier Genesis*. On the other hand, from the phrase *suaviusque resonando doctores suos vicissim auditores sui faciebat*, we are not to infer that these teachers, turned auditors, when writing down Caedmon's poems from his own mouth,—as they most probably did—were content to write every line just as it was uttered. I cannot help thinking that, now and then, they submitted to the poet's judgment alterations or additions to be made, for the sake of correctness or completeness, repeating to him that part of the lesson required for the purpose. For aught I know, they may even have gone so far as to make corrections of less im-

[1] More strictly speaking, of the portion beginning at v. 852.

port, for instance, concerning names and numbers, on their own responsibility.

As to the second point, having once more read the passage in Bede, it seems impossible to come to a conclusion respecting its purport different from that reached many years ago, to wit, that Caedmon composed epic as well as lyrical and didactic poems; and I entirely fail to see how Prof. Ebert should have come to a different result.

To infer from the phrase *Canebat autem de creatione mundi et origine humani generis et tota Genesis historia*, etc., that the poems composed by Caedmon on these and similar subjects were hymns, would be much the same thing as to infer from the phrase *Arma virumque cano* that Virgil meant to compose a hymn when writing his *Æneid*. When Prof. Ebert says with respect to the *(carmina) de beneficiis et judiciis divinis*, mentioned by Bede, "that the subject of these songs throws a light on the poetic manner in which Caedmon treated biblical subjects," I cannot but think that he has overlooked the circumstance that the new sentence, beginning with *Item de terrore*, as it points to a different range of subjects, not unlikely, in Bede's mind, was to suggest also a a manner of composition differing from the poems mentioned in the preceding sentence.[1] It may be added that, within narrower bounds, the same holds with regard to the subdivision of the second sentence, marked by the words *sed et alia perplura*. The Professor's supposition that Caedmon "certainly" composed only in a single form or species of poetry, can be admitted only in so far as all English poets, almost without exception, may be said to have cultivated ths same poetic form. They all employed the epic measure and drew, more or less largely, from the epic vocabulary; while, on the other hand, they were wont to introduce a certain amount of subjective feeling and reflection even into such of their compositions as come nearest to the purely epic type. Notwithstanding this, we may, among Cynewulf's works for instance, distinguish epic, lyrical, and didactic poems; and there is no reason whatever for supposing that Caedmon's poetry excluded the epic *genre*.

[1] As to the *Apostolorum doctrina*, closing the enumeration in the preceding sentence, the expression doubtless does not mean the substance of the apostolic doctrine, but rather the manner in which it was propagated: in other words, the story of the apostles, as told in the Acts and, perhaps, in apocryphal accounts.

Great stress is laid by Prof. Ebert on the pious intention and the didactic tendency with which Caedmon, according to Bede, composed his poems. If I do not misinterpret the Professor's meaning, he seems to hold that lyrical poems, at least such as answer to the character of hymns, are more apt to draw people on to virtue, than compositions of the truly epic kind. Now this is a point upon which I should not like to enter into discussion. Looking, however, at the large amount of Bible epics and the numberless lives of saints composed during the Middle Ages, and considering the general purpose with which these were professedly written, as well as the special ends they were frequently made to serve, I cannot refrain from observing that Prof. Ebert's opinion, whether right or wrong, was certainly not the opinion prevalent at the earlier stages of Occidental literature. Nor, if we turn to a later age, does it seem to have been the opinion held by such poets as Spenser and Milton.

VI. The twentieth volume of the *Germania* (edited by Karl Bartsch) contains, on pp. 292–305, an essay on the Exodus poem by Dr. Joseph Strobl, which I cannot here pass over in silence, as it is a rather remarkable specimen of acute, but somewhat venturesome criticism. According to Dr. Strobl, the original poem, treating of the fortunes of the Israelites on the Red Sea, began at v. 135 of the transmitted text, and had quite the character of an epic song. To this piece was first prefixed an introduction, from another hand, containing the substance of v. 1–55. Next a great many passages[1] were interpolated into the text by a third poet, anxious to bring about a greater conformity with the biblical narrative; and, finally, in the introduction, too, interpolations were inserted.

The evidence collected by Dr. Strobl in support of this theory bears partly upon the use of certain words and epithets, and partly upon the connection of thought. I do not wish to pass a summary judgment upon the author's manner of reasoning; but I will not withhold a few observations on his results.

I agree with Dr. Strobl in admitting that the poem of *Exodus* contains some interpolations; but I must say that

[1] Among the larger interpolations assumed by Dr. Strobl are (besides v. 362–455, which I, too, consider as interpolated) v. 56–134 and 515–547.

among the passages he marks as interpolated the greater part afford us no sufficient grounds for doubting their genuineness.

As to the beginning of the original poem, I feel absolutely sure that it did *not* begin at v. 135, even supposing the reading proposed by Dr. Strobl to be the true one, which it is certainly not:

> þær on fyrd *frêcne* fârspell becwôm,
> ôht inlende. . . . .

I know of no epic song, no popular ballad, beginning in this abrupt way. Much less would a writer of religious poetry, imitating the epic style, have hazarded such an exordium. Dr. Strobl's *Liedertheorie* evidently does not agree with the facts. If he wants to convince himself of this, let him look at any collection of ballads written in any European language whatever. Take, for instance, the *Romancero del Cid.* As a rule, in each poem the situation, together with the persons acting, frequently also the place of action, is clearly pointed out from the beginning. There are some exceptions, it is true, based, it would seem, upon the principle of rousing the auditor's curiosity. In these the poem mainly consists of a speech, at the end of which the person who pronounced it is named. Setting aside the question as to the origin of this latter sort of ballads, it is evident that their, so to say, dramatic way of plunging into *medias res* is not at all to be compared with an opening like that assumed by Dr. Strobl. Turning to an instance more near at hand, to the *Hildebrandslied*, we have the names of both heroes, father and son, mentioned in the very first sentence. Dr. Strobl, in corroboration of his view, refers to the opening lines of what, according to Prof. Müllenhoff's story, makes up the first song of *Beowulf:*

> þæt fram hâm gefrægn Hygelâces þegn,
> gôd mid Geâtum, Grendles dæda.

But, granting the method of supporting one theory by another to be legitimate, nobody, I hope, will fail to see the enormous difference between the two instances. In the *Beowulf*-lines we have not less than three proper names (including the gentile noun *Geâtas)*, and the two chief actors of the story, Beowulf *(Hygelâces þegn)* and Grendel, are clearly pointed out; whereas in the passage of *Exodus* cited

above there is nothing of the kind, the expression *Egypta cyn* (v. 145) occurring not less than ten lines later, and the expression *Moyses leóde*, after another interval of seven lines (v. 152). In short, there cannot be the least doubt that the Exodus-poem had an introduction; and evidence quite different from that produced by Dr. Strobl would be required to establish the fact that its present introduction, whether containing interpolations or not, was not the original one.

I should like to say a few words on the very curious explanation the learned critic gives of v. 467–479, which, according to him, depict the perilous situation of the Israelites marching across the Red Sea; but I must resist the temptation.

B.—(BOOK I., CHAPTER V.).

CYNEWULF'S LIFE AND WORKS.

My account of Cynewulf, or Coenewulf, is chiefly based on the investigations of Professor Dietrich,[1] whose results, however, I have accepted only in so far as they seemed to me fully established. I do not follow Dietrich in identifying Cynewulf, the poet, with Cynewulf, the bishop of Lindisfarne (737–780), nor in ascribing to him the fragment extant of an Old English *Physiologus*. Next to the learned Marburg professor, I feel most indebted, for this portion of my work, to Heinrich Leo,[2] who first showed that the charade prefixed to the collection of *Riddles* in the Exeter MS., contains the name of Cynewulf, and to Dr. Max Rieger,[3] for his excellent commentary on the same charade and his interpretation of the runes occurring in the epilogue to *Elene*. It is mainly owing to Dr. Rieger's researches that Cynewulf's Northumbrian origin, which had not been quite sufficiently established, either by Leo or by Dietrich, now may be taken for granted, and that a satisfactory explanation of

[1] See *Zeitschrift für deutches Alterthum*, IX., p. 193; XI., p. 448; XII., p. 232; *Jahrbuch für romanische und englische Literatur*, I. p. 241; *Commentatio de Kynewulfi poetae aetate*, etc., Marburg, 1860; *Disputatio de cruce Ruthwellensi*, Marburg, 1865.

[2] *Quae de se ipse Cynewulfus . . . tradiderit*, Halle, 1857.

[3] *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, I., pp. 215–226, 313–334.

the epilogue mentioned has become possible. But as to the explanation given by Dr. Rieger himself, I believe I have shown elsewhere[1] that it cannot be accepted without some essential modifications, chiefly important on account of their bearing upon the question of the chronology of Cynewulf's works. Respecting the same critic's attempt to show that Cynewulf, besides the greater part of the poems ascribed to him by Dietrich, wrote also the *Wanderer*, the *Seafarer*, and several other lyric and gnomic pieces, I shall only say that it appears to me unsuccessful. The analogy in idea and expression existing between these poems and some of the undoubted works of Cynewulf would be sufficiently accounted for by supposing one poet to have imitated the other, or both an earlier writer. And, in my opinion, there is much in the manner of the *Wanderer*, as well as the *Seafarer*, not exactly corresponding to Cynewulf's poetical character, as displayed in his authentic productions. The same must be said with regard to the *Rhyming Poem*, ascribed to Cynewulf by Grein, but, as shown by Dr. Rieger, most probably belonging to a later age.

More particulars concerning the above-mentioned, as well as other writers, on our poet may be found in Prof. Wülcker's essay *Ueber Cynewulf*, published in the *Anglia*, I. pp. 483–507, some months after the appearance of the original edition of the present volume. It is the first of a series of articles on Cynewulf, contained in the same periodical, and purporting to submit to a new examination some of the chief results arrived at by earlier investigators, and notably by Dietrich.

Prof. Wülcker begins by drawing a rather elaborate sketch of what he calls the romance concerning Cynewulf's life. As the different features of his picture are borrowed from different authors, it cannot be said to give, as a whole, a fair representation of the views professed by any of them.[2] At all events, I for my own part shall be justified in saying nothing about it, my own account of Cynewulf's life being not in the least more romantic than the views developed by

[1] See *Anzeiger für deutches Alterthum*, V., p. 64, *et seq.*

[2] Perhaps we ought to except Grein, whose theory on Cynewulf, as developed in his lectures, is alluded to by Wülcker in several passages of the above-mentioned essay, and has since been made accessible to the public; see *Angelsächsische Grammatik von Prof. Dr. C. W. M. Grein*, Kassel, 1880, pp. 11–15.

Wülcker himself, at the close of his essay, and indeed differing but very little from them.

Having sketched the romance, the Professor proceeds to examine the foundations it is built on. The results of this inquiry are summed up, on p. 506 of his essay, under the following four heads:

1. "The Ruthwell Cross has nothing whatever to do with our poet, even if the poem written on it should have been composed by Cynewulf."

2. "Our poet was certainly not the same person with that Cynewulf who, having been bishop of Lindisfarena ê from about 737 till 780, withdrew and soon after died."

3. "There is no sufficient evidence for admitting that Cynewulf was a native of Northumbria."

4. "The *Dream of the Cross* was *not* composed by Cynewulf."

As to the first and second of these theses, being substantially of the same opinion as Prof. Wülcker, I shall dispense with discussing his arguments. Concerning the two latter points, I refer the reader to my review of Prof. Zupitza's edition of Cynewulf's *Elene*, printed in *Anzeiger für deutches Alterthum*, V. pp. 53–70. He there will find Wülcker's objections refuted, the arguments establishing Cynewulf's Northumbrian origin summed up, and additional evidence produced for the fact that he really wrote the *Dream of the Cross*.

The second volume of the *Anglia* contains two essays on subjects connected with Cynewulf. The first, by Dr. Charitius, (pp. 268–308) purports to show that from the two parts which are to be distinguished in the poem of *Guthlac*,[1] only the latter (B), founded upon the *Vita Guthlaci*, was written by Cynewulf, whereas the former part (A) is to be regarded as the work of an earlier poet. Having no leisure, for the present, to enter upon the details of this question, I can only express my conviction that Dr. Charitius, whilst strengthening Dietrich's arguments respecting the authorship of *Guthlac B*, has failed to prove his own theory concerning *Guthlac A*. I still hold it possible, nay probable, that this part, too,

[1] This was first remarked by Dr. Rieger: see *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, I. p. 326, note. In his essay on *Andreas* (*Anglia*, II. p. 461) Dr. Fritzsche observes that traces of an acquaintance with the *Vita Guthlaci* may be seen also in *Guthlac A* from v. 500 on.

was written by Cynewulf, although I admit that a new inquiry into the question would be desirable. At all events, thus much seems to result from Charitius's investigations, that the lapse of time intervening between the composition of *Guthlac A* and *Guthlac B* must have been a rather considerable one.

The second article, by Dr. Fritzsche (pp. 441–496), discusses the question of the authorship of the Andreas-poem, coming to the conclusion that this was not written by Cynewulf himself, but by another poet belonging to his school. This essay is, on the whole, written with great care,[1] as well as a certain amount of acumen, and the author's argument, though not absolutely convincing, is well calculated to raise serious doubts concerning Cynewulf's authorship.

Finally, in an essay printed in the third volume of the *Anglia*, pp. 488–526, Dr. Gäbler shows that Dietrich was right in ascribing to Cynewulf the poem of the *Phoenix*.

C.—(BOOK I. CHAPTER VII.).

ASSER'S LIFE OF AELFRED AND THE WINCHESTER ANNALS.

One of the critics of my *Litteraturgeschichte* pointed out to me the letters written by Mr. Henry H. Howorth to the editor of the *Athenaeum*, from March 25, '76 to August 4, '77 (which had escaped my notice when I was preparing the volume for the press), as containing conclusive evidence of the inauthenticity of Asser's *Life of Aelfred*. Having now carefully read them through, as well as some other recent matter on the same subject, I must say, the question, in my eyes, remains nearly the same as before, surrounded by the greatest difficulties and involved in dense obscurity. It would be out of place in an appendix to a work of this nature to enter upon the details of a problem of only secondary importance with regard to the general object of the work; but the serious doubts existing in respect of the date and

[1] I cannot, however, help wondering at the fact that Dr. Fritzsche, as well as Dr Charitius, whilst alluding to the conclusions in Prof. Wülcker's essay on Cynewulf, seems to be quite unaware of the existence of my article in the *Anzeiger* (v. s.), in which part of them are refuted.

origin of the said biography not having been indicated in my text, it may be as well to say at least in a note that I am fully aware of their weight, and think it no easy, though at the same time no impossible, task to remove them.

As to Mr. Howorth's attempt to show that the Parker MS. of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was probably copied from the Cottonian MS., Otho, B. xi., I hope I may be allowed to express my conviction that he has entirely failed to prove his case, and that paleographical as well as linguistic evidence is most decidedly in favour of the earlier origin of the Parker MS. I am confident that, unless quite unlooked-for materials should one day turn up, the Parker MS. will for ever maintain its rank as being, on the whole, the most authentic copy of the Winchester *Annals*, and chiefly as presenting in its earlier script, extending to the year 991, the most trustworthy text of a compilation made in the days of King Aelfred.

D.—(BOOK I., CHAPTER VII.).

THE WORKS OF KING AELFRED.

According to Prof. Wülcker (*Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, IV. pp. 100–131), part of Aelfred's *Enchiridion* would have come down to us in the Old English version of St. Augustine's *Soliloquia*, contained in the Cottonian MS., Vitellius, A. XV. On the other hand, Dr. E. Gropp (*On the Language of the Proverbs of Aelfred*, Halis Saxonum, 1829 [read: 1879], p. 15) seeks to establish a certain connection between Aelfred's *Hand-book* and the early Middle English *Proverbs*, going under the name of the great West-Saxon king. (Compare B. II. ch. v. of the present work.)

E.—(BOOK I., CHAPTER IX.).

WULFSTAN'S HOMILIES.

According to Dr. Arthur Napier, who has quite recently given us a good edition of two of Wulfstan's homilies, to-

gether with the so-called *Pastoral Mandate* (*Ueber die Werke des altenglischen Erzbischofs Wulfstan*, Weimar, 1882), the greater part of the fifty-three homilies ascribed to Wulfstan by Wanley, consist of compilations from different other homilies, some among the number being simply taken from the Blickling series, or from the collections composed by Aelfric, with another exordium prefixed to them. Dr. Napier says that a critical examination of the homilies in question, with a view of establishing their authorship, should proceed upon the basis afforded by the four pieces unquestionably belonging to Wulfstan, namely Nos. 1, 2, 5,[1] 6, according to Wanley's numbering. Applying this method to the *Pastoral Mandate*, he arrives at the conclusion that of the two parts which may be distinguished in it only the former was written by Wulfstan.

F.—(BOOK II., CHAPTER XI.).

GENESIS AND EXODUS.

The opinion expressed in my account of the Middle English *Story of Genesis and Exodus* concerning the identical authorship of the two poems, namely, that it was a supposition wanting proof and, on the whole, rather improbable, has called forth an essay by Dr. Fritzsche, *Ist die altenglische "Story of Genesis and Exodus" das werk eines verfassers?* (*Anglia*, V. pp. 43–90). By a comparison of the versification (including rhyme and alliteration), the language, and the phraseology of both poems, Dr. Fritzsche attempts to show that the question is to be answered in the affirmative. Unfortunately the phonological part of his treatise is quite unsatisfactory, and I am sorry to say that, generally speaking, the evidence collected by him does not seem sufficient to me. With regard to the passage quoted from my book on pp. 44–45 of the essay, I was somewhat surprised to find that the author, having correctly reproduced my words in that place, apparently had forgotten their meaning when applying, on p. 82, what I had said about the *dialect* to the *style* of the poems in question.

[1] No. 5 is the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* alluded to in our text.

G.—(BOOK II., CHAPTER XII.).

THE LEGENDS OF ST. KATHERINE, ST. MARGARET, AND ST. JULIANA, AND THE HOMILY ON "HALI MEIDENHAD."

The poems mentioned in the heading of this note have been quite recently submitted to a close investigation, bearing on their form as well as their conception, by Dr. Eugen Einenkel, *Ueber die Verfasser einiger neuangelsächsischer Schriften*, Leipzig, 1881, and *Ueber den Verfasser der neuangelsächsischen Legende von Katharina*, published in the *Anglia*, V. pp. 91–123. The result of Dr. Einenkel's researches, as far as the authorship of the four poems is concerned, is this, that *St. Marherete* and *St. Juliana* are to be ascribed to the same poet, whereas *St. Katherine*, being probably the earliest in date, and *Hali Meidenhad*, showing traces that the homilist was acquainted with the life of St. Margaret, were written by different authors. With regard to the metre of these poems, I wish to observe that the difference to be remarked between the judgment given upon the matter in the text of the present work, and Dr. Einenkel's opinion on the same subject, may, for a large part, be reduced to a mere dissimilarity of terminology; but this dissimilarity is such as to presuppose a real disparity of views in respect of the Old English alliterative measure and its later development.

H.—(BOOK III., CHAPTER II.)

THE DATE OF THE ENGLISH SONG OF ROLAND.

The fragment of the *Song of Roland*, contained in the Lansdowne MS. 388, involves some of the most intricate problems of philological criticism I know of. Whether considering the metre or the rhymes, or, finally, the style of the poem, we meet with many striking peculiarities, and though in most cases, taken separately, analogies will not be found wanting, yet I hold it to be extremely difficult to attach the composition, as a whole, to a neatly circumscribed group of

Middle English poems. Now this circumstance will be allowed by all persons somewhat versed in literary criticism to render the task of determining the date of the poem a very delicate one. The chief test to be applied to a work of this character will, of course, be that of the language. But here a new difficulty arises. Whenever we want to fix the grammatical forms used by a poet, and altered by the scribes, together with the phonetic value originally attached to them, we recur to an examination of the rhymes and the metre employed in the poem. But the verse in the *Song of Roland*, being so peculiar, or what amounts nearly to the same thing, so irregular, as to admit of more than one metrical theory, turns out to be of but little help in the present case; and a great part of the rhymes occurring in the poem are so imperfect as almost to justify Mr. Sidney J. Herrtage in saying "that a good and true rime is the exception, not the rule," whereas, "several lines occur in which, whether from the fault of the author or his copier, no rime at all is apparent." This, then, being the case, it is evident either that the poet was so inconsistent in following the rules of his art as to render the usual tests, when applied to his work, almost useless, or that his work has been tampered with by scribes and revisers in a most atrocious way. Now I believe that, notwithstanding these difficulties, it is not impossible to get at a tolerably clear and exact notion of the original form of the poem. But to bring this about will be a very arduous task, which I hope I shall be justified in not attempting in this place nor at this time. As to the recent researches on the subject by Dr. Schleich (see *Prolegomena ad carmen de Rolando anglicum*, 1879, and *Anglia*, IV., pp. 307–341), and by Mr. Sidney J. Herrtage, in the introduction to his edition of the *English Charlemagne Romances*, Part II. (E. E. T. S., 1880), I must say that, highly meritorious as they are, especially those of the former, they hardly go into the heart of the question. Concerning the date of the poem, the views expressed by the German and the English scholar are somewhat different. The former, judging from the loss of the final *e* (a test, it must be said, not much to be relied on in the present case, nor applied by Dr. Schleich with quite sufficient accuracy), thinks it probable that the *Song of Roland* was composed after 1400 (see es-

pecially *Anglia*, IV., p. 315); whereas, Mr. Sidney J. Herrtage is inclined to fix on that very year as the probable date, and believes that in doing so, he is, "if anything, putting it too late." In the short account given of the poem in the present work I refrained from expressing a definite opinion on the subject, but the place in which the *Song* is spoken of, points to the beginning of the fourteenth century. Now, I confess it seems rather probable that the poem was composed at a somewhat later date, but whether it ought to be assigned to the reign of Edward III. or of Richard II., is a question I shall, for the present, not undertake to decide.

NOTE TO PAGE 107.—I am happy to say that the edition of the *Passiones Sanctorum* prepared by Prof. Skeat, for the Early English Text Society, has now begun to appear, the first Part being among the Society's publications for 1881.

THE END.

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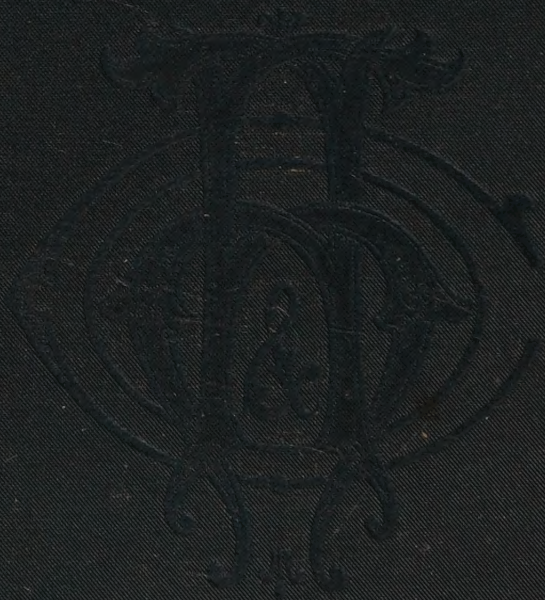

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